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Bass Guitar Magazine

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PERIPHERY

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BRUCE FOXTON
FROM THE JAM

Future
AUGUST 2016
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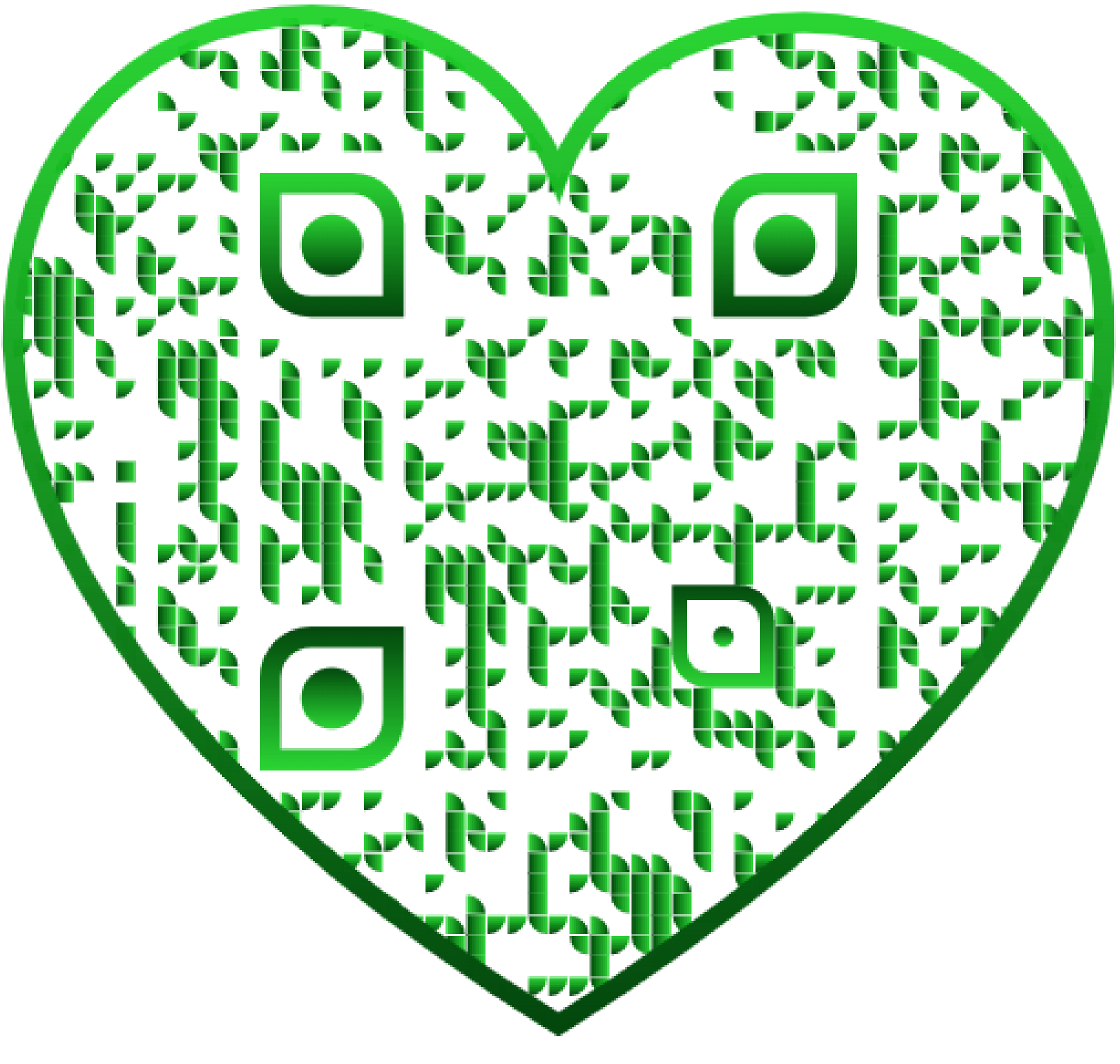

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CONTENTS
ISSUE 133 AUGUST 2016

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Being known as the best in your field isn't always fun (unless, ahem, you're *Bass Guitar Magazine* of course, this country's only print publication devoted to bass). Just ask Victor Wooten. A master of every single aspect of bass playing and its associated philosophies, the mighty Woot has elevated the art form to a level of world-class sophistication. But he's not trying to be the best, or the fastest, or the most technical bassist on the planet: as he tells us in this special extended interview, he's just trying to serve the music. This and many other lessons make this issue one to treasure, with added value from our interviews with Duff McKagan (he of the biggest rock band in the world, Guns N' Roses, lest we forget); Bruce Foxton, sometime of the Jam; Bryan Ferry bassist Jimmy Sims; Periphery's Adam 'Nolly' Getgood; and a host of other bass players from the soul, funk and metal worlds.

The fun doesn't stop there, with our state-of-the-art reviews section encompassing wallet-threatening bass gear from Mayones and affordable products from Ibanez, Orange and elsewhere. We say hello to Italian newcomers GRBass and check in with the FX makers du jour Darkglass, too. As for our tutors? There's no better range of experts in bass world, with a graded set of columns for beginner, intermediate and advanced bassists of the electric and upright persuasion.

What does all this add up to? Simply the most fulfilling bass experience you can get for under a fiver. Dive in, and see you in August!

Joel McIver, editor

56
Ibanez SR-6

52
Orange Crush 100, 50 and 25

48
Mayones Patriot

Gear

48 Mayones Patriot
Mike Brooks road-tests this Polish gem...

52 Ibanez SR 6
...before switching to a sub-£800 fanned-fret version of a classic

56 Orange Crush 100, 50 and 25
Three new Orange boxes run through their paces by Kev Sanders

60 GRBass 700+ head
Dave Clarke says buongiorno to a new Italian amp

64 Darkglass Vintage Ultra
Joel McIver steps onto the Finnish-Chilean FX-makers' latest Ultra variant

Bassists

22 Victor Wooten
Songwriter, touring musician, educator – and philosopher – Victor Wooten tells Joel McIver what it's like to be the most acclaimed bassist of his generation in 2016

32 Duff McKagan, Guns N' Roses
Away from the stadiums and the celebrity headlines, Duff reveals the man behind the cool to Ben Cooper

34 Download Festival report
The bassists. The beer. The bloody mud! *BGM* hits Donington

38 Bruce Foxton
The legendary sometime Jam bassist talks to us about his new, Wilko-and-Weller-featuring album

40 Jimmy Sims
Bryan Ferry's bassist meets Mike Brooks for a chat about life on the big stages

42 Ahren Stringer
Unison lines or counterpoint? Aussie headbanger Ahren takes a view

44 Mike Watt
The renowned Minutemen bassist looks back with Joe Shooman

44 Adam 'Nolly' Getgood, Periphery
Switching seamlessly from guitar to bass with Adam: Silvia Bluejay asks the questions

Tuition

70 Frontline
Four pro bassists offer you their collective wisdom. Get smart here

BEGINNER

72 Ellen O'Reilly
Ellen O'Reilly
Beginner's bass guru Ellen hits the diminished triad

74 Paul Geary
Step into different time signatures with tech ninja Geary

INTERMEDIATE

76 Stuart Clayton
Commander Clayton heads into blues territory

78 Rob Statham
Efficient plucking with the great Statham

ADVANCED

80 Franc O'Shea
Sustaining root notes under melodies? Franc is the master

84 Philip Mann
More signs o' the times with the ever-informative bass maestro Mann

86 David Etheridge
'Girl From Ipanema' revisited for double bass

88 Steve Lawson
Hunt down the right pedals with Obi-Wan Lawson

90 Classic Bass Albums
A slab of vintage James Brown celebrated. Go Bootsy!

SUBSCRIBE NOW
DETAILS PAGE 82

THE LOW DOWN

News and views from the bass world, collated by BGM's team of intrepid newshounds

NIELSEN DATA

Check out Ida Nielsen's new signature Sandberg, a splendid-looking California VM with TM Black Label pickups, a soft aged alder body, maple neck, birdseye maple fingerboard, D-Tuner, thumbrest, flower patterned pickguard, gold hardware, black block inlays, matched headstock, and fluorescent side dots. Ida, best known for her work in Prince's backup band 3rd Eye Girl, hinted at a signature model when we interviewed her a while back, so we've been eager to see the finished item. Snag one for £1995 before everybody else does.

www.sandberg-guitars.de

TOM TOM CLUB

Veteran guitar makers Gretsch have announced two stunning Tom Petersson signature bass models. Petersson, well known for his sterling work on many a hit by American stadium-rockers Cheap Trick, was inducted into the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame with his band a couple of months back – and despite the fact that the group have released no fewer than 17 studio albums and should by rights be retired by now, are enjoying their highest profile in years. So the arrival of the new basses, a four- and 12-string, is timely.

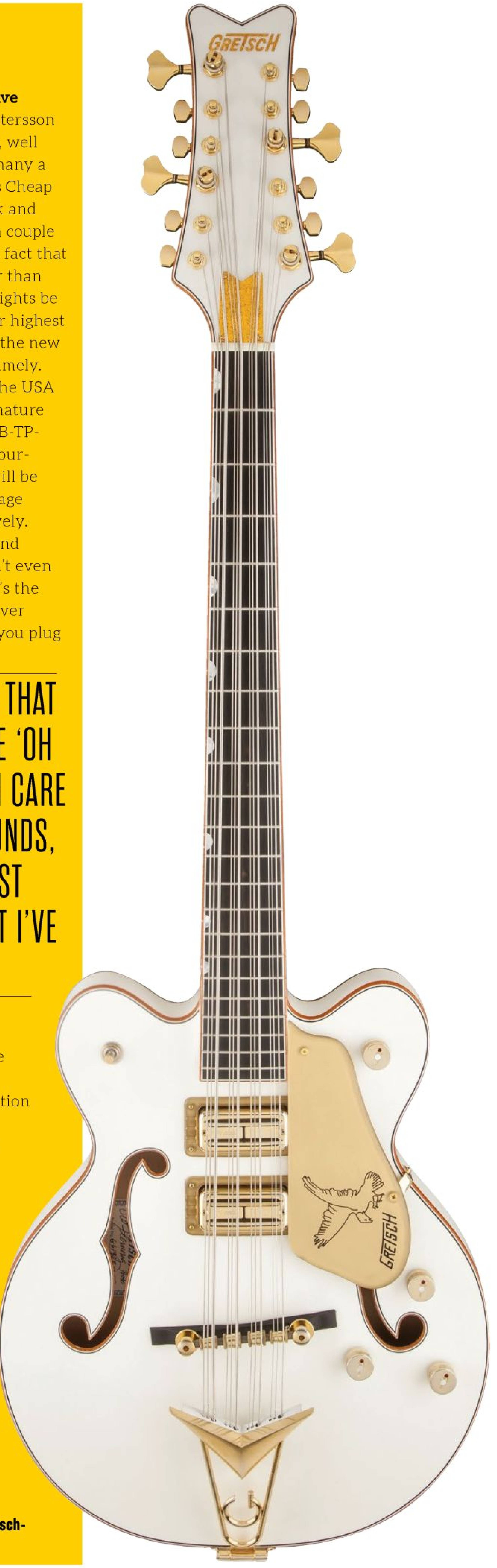
Officially titled (deep breath) the USA Custom Shop Tom Petersson Signature 12-String Falcon Bass and G6136B-TP-AWT Tom Petersson Signature Four-String Bass, these instruments will be available early next year in Vintage White and Aged White respectively.

"You show up with that bass and people are like 'Oh my God! I don't even care how that thing sounds, that's the coolest looking instrument I've ever seen'," says Petersson. "But then you plug it in and it's like, 'Oh my, whoa, what is going on here?' So it's the best of every world."

> "YOU SHOW UP WITH THAT AND PEOPLE ARE LIKE 'OH MY GOD! I DON'T EVEN CARE HOW THAT THING SOUNDS, THAT'S THE COOLEST LOOKING INSTRUMENT I'VE EVER SEEN'"

There's no word yet on production numbers or RRP, but judging by the specs list for either bass, the instruments' price point will be high. The 12-string comes with a laminated maple body, a 12"-radius ebony fingerboard with 22 vintage-style frets and mother-of pearl inlays, a 'C' shaped maple gloss-finished neck, a short 30.3" scale, dual custom Seymour Duncan Super Tron pickups, a Space Control bridge and Gretsch 'Cadillac' tailpiece, gold hardware and pickguard. The four-string differs in the bridge but is otherwise similar. Better start saving.

www.gretschguitars.com/blog/tag/gretsch-12-string-bass



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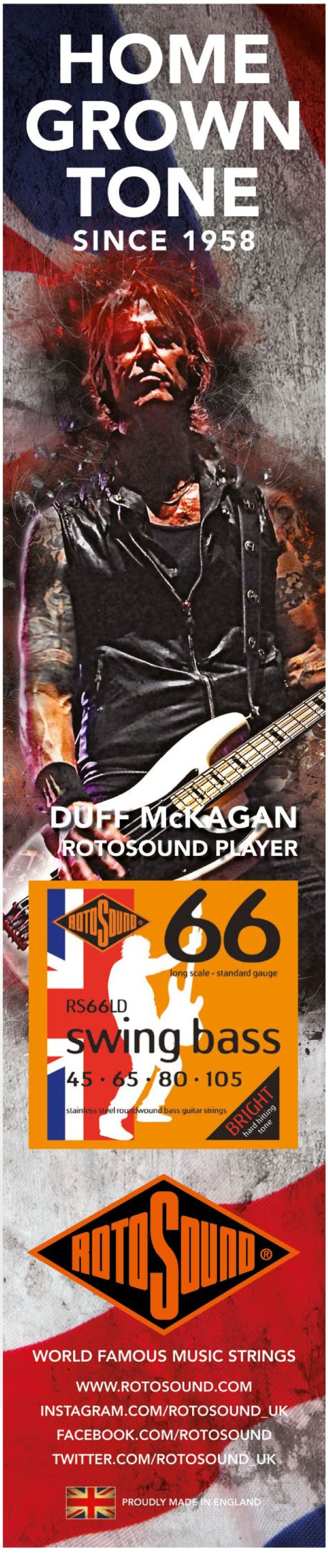
Pic by Kevin Estrada

TONY AWARDS

Legendary bassist Tony Levin returns with a new album from Levin Minnemann Rudess, amusingly called *From The Law Offices Of Levin Minnemann Rudess*. Alongside Marco Minnemann (Steven Wilson, Joe Satriani, The Aristocrats) and Jordan Rudess (Dream Theater), our man plays cello and Chapman Stick as well as bass: a pre-order of the album comes with a free download of a song called 'Riff Splat', more than enough reason to buy if you ask us.
www.pledgemusic.com/projects/lmr



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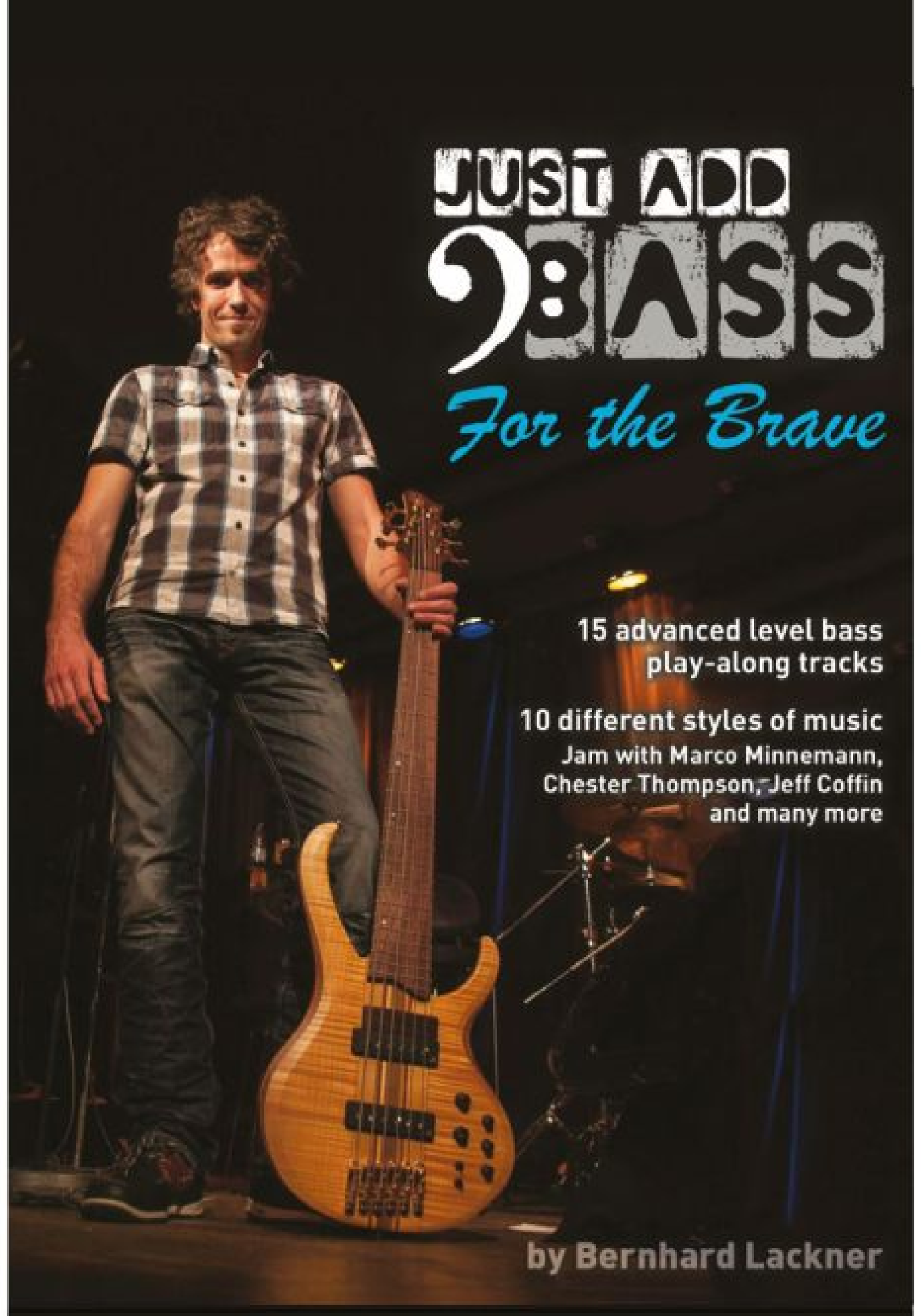
BASSIC BOX

Recording engineer and studio equipment designer Malcolm Toft has been in the industry for nearly 50 years, mixing the Beatles' 'Hey Jude', engineering David Bowie's 'Space Oddity', working with artists such as T-Rex and James Taylor and founding recording console manufacturer Trident Audio Developments, so we paid attention when he announced his new bass preamp.

"When recording bass," says the great man, "it is usually common practice to DI [the signal] into the console so that the powerful console EQ can be used to shape the sound, together with studio quality compression. I have thought that for a long time the bass player is the poor relation when it comes to manufacturers providing the range of tailored equalisation that basses really require. I also thought that it would be a great idea to take the pre-amplification out of the amplifier and put it in a unit conveniently located at the bass player's feet so that they had immediate access to all of the controls. This way, they would only need a power amp and speakers or could plug directly into the PA system, therefore they would only need to take a small unit to a gig."

Hence the arrival of the BPA-1 (RRP £420), a two-input unit with three swept frequency ranges tailored for bass, plus a studio-quality compressor with attack and release times also designed for bass. There's an FX loop before the equaliser and two balanced DI outputs, one directly after the input preamp and one at the final output. Watch out for our review.

www.bassics.co.uk, www.synergydistribution.co.uk



FEEL THE BERN

Austrian bassist/composer Bernhard Lackner has just released a series of three bass e-books: one at basic level *(Start Grooving)*, one intermediate *(Step It Up)*, and another for advanced tunes *(For The Brave)*. Each book offers a variety of styles of music and the tracks feature players such as Marco Minnemann (drums), Jeff Coffin (saxophone), Chester Thompson (drums) and Victor Wooten's drummer Derico Watson. Each package includes charts (tabs included), full-mix and bass-less versions of the songs.

www.bernhardlackner.com

Pic by Rick Gould

G MAN

Sometime Deep Purple and Black Sabbath bassist Glenn Hughes has a busy few months ahead, having scheduled a new solo album for release in November as well as dealing with the welcome reformation of Black Country Communion, the supergroup he formed back in 2010 with guitarist Joe Bonamassa and drummer Jason Bonham.

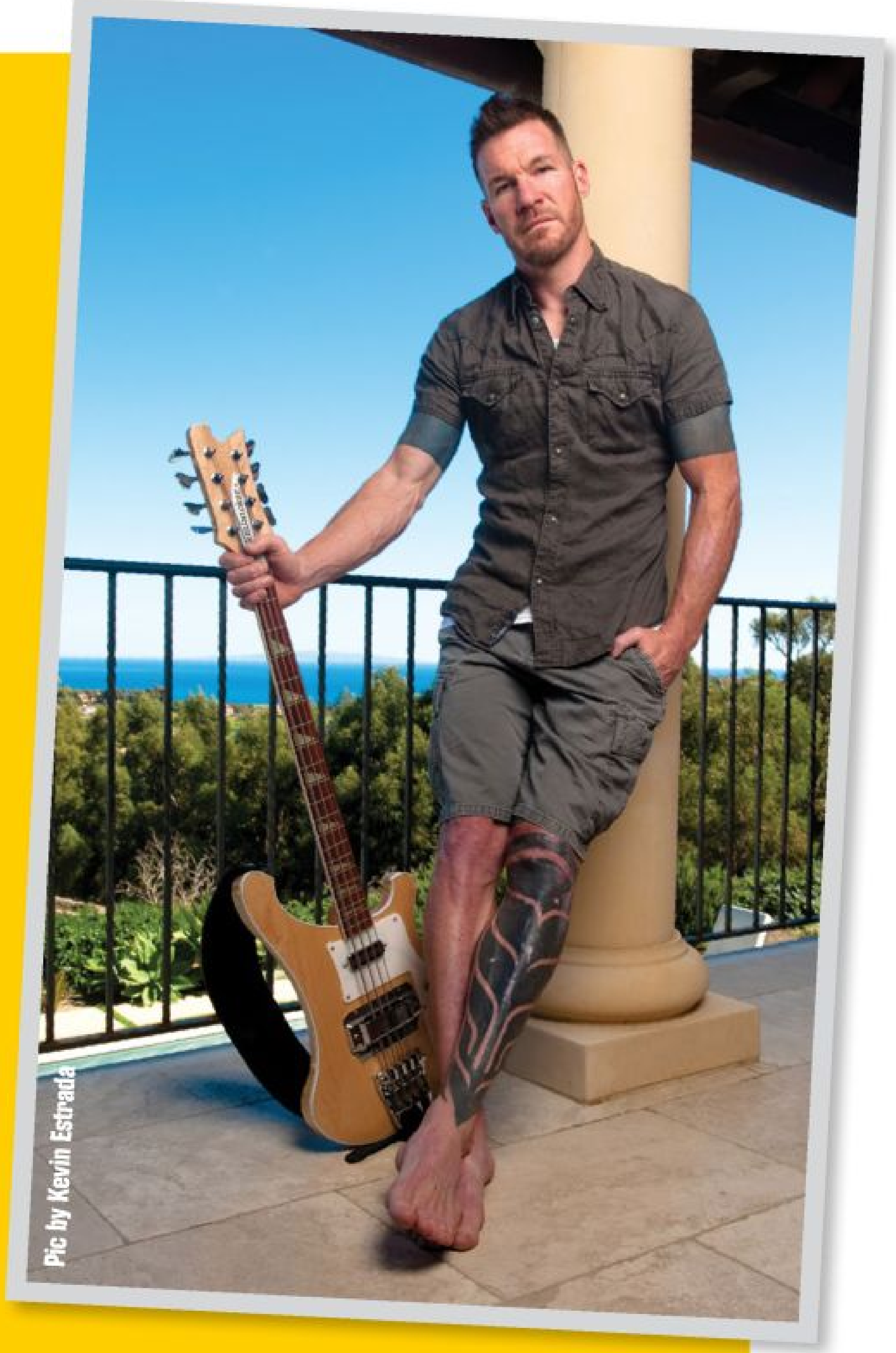
As Hughes told *Metalized* magazine, "I was doing an interview with Gary Graff, the editor of *Billboard* magazine in America… I said to him that I don't think I will ever be in a band again after Black Country Communion because the legacy of those three albums was so mighty and the band was so good with each member being very, very good. I said to him that Black Country Communion will be the last band I play in. Three weeks later, Joe Bonamassa calls me for dinner. I had no idea why."

He continued: "We're friends. We've always been friends. People thought we weren't friends. He said, 'Hey, don't you think it's time we make another great album?' I said, 'I do. And do you know that this is the last band I am gonna play in?' We joked about it… We are going to do this one step at a time. Let's do the album and think about doing some shows. Let's see what happens. Let's embrace it… I think the world needs another big rock album."

Info: www.glennhughes.com

TIM TIME

Tim Commerford, once of Rage Against The Machine and recently on *BGM's* cover with his new project, Future User, is back with not one but two projects. The first is Wakrat, a hardcore punk outfit in which Commerford plays bass alongside Mathias Wakrat on drums, and Laurent Grangeon on guitar and vocals. The second is Prophets Of Rage, a reunion of RATM's guitarist Tom Morello, drummer Brad Wilk and the man himself plus Public Enemy rapper Chuck D and Cypress Hill's B-Real on vocals.


Pic by Kevin Estrada

Said Commerford, "I am as excited about Wakrat and what we're doing musically as I was when Rage Against The Machine first started. Wakrat is brand new, we're not a known commodity, so we're looking forward to finishing the album, paying our dues and earning our fans, and getting out there and playing shows as often as possible." He's doing that in the best way possible – by supporting Prophets Of Rage on their American tour dates. His fingers will be hurting, we predict.

www.prophetsofrage.com, www.wakratband.com

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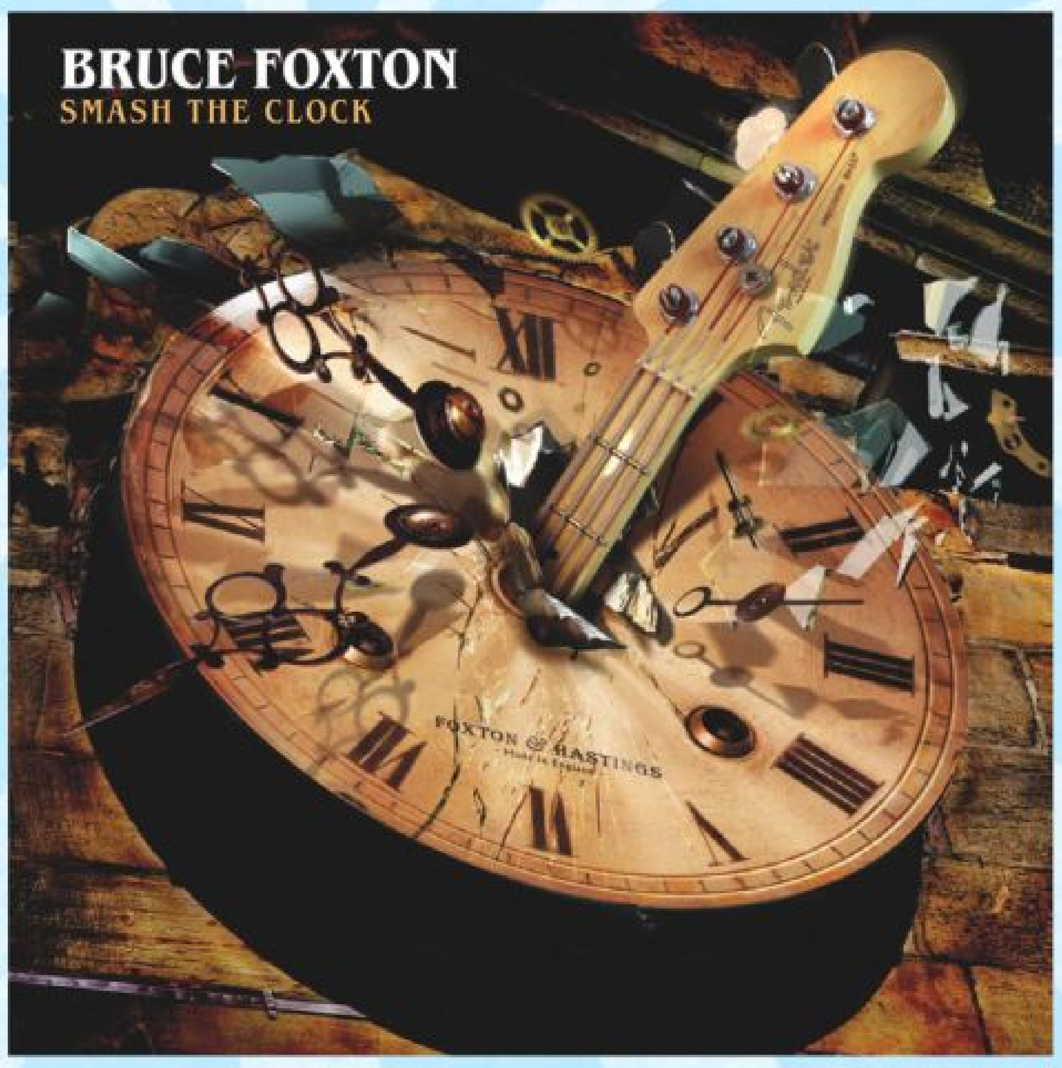
Pic by Derek D Souza

Win

Nab one of five copies of sometime Jam bassist Bruce Foxton's new album *Smash The Clock* by answering this easy-peasy question:



Which famous Jam song includes a notable Foxton bass intro?

A 'Town Called Malice'
B 'Town Called Alice'
C 'Town Called Guildford'

Answers to www.bassguitarmagazine.com/competition or to the usual postal address by 6 September.

Won

Copies of Motorhead's *Clean Your Clock* DVD go to Chris Gnarra, Mark Hoare, Mark Goodhew, Jim Rumsey and Steve Foulkes. Thanks to all who entered.

REVOLVER

Every month we tell you the bass-line we can't stop listening to

THIS MONTH: Limp Bizkit, 'Rearranged'

Bassist: Sam Rivers

Rap-metallers Limp Bizkit are currently fashionable among young listeners in much the same way that the surface of the sun is freezing cold, but we don't care because bassist Sam Rivers is a hell of a player whose lines make us happy. On this song, a reflective moment among the generally sweary, gobby tunes on the Florida band's 1999 second album, the young fella delivers a chordal figure with legato hammer-ons that push the song along in a generally dark and intense manner. See our cover interview with the boy Rivers from *BGM* 99, back in 2013, for more info.

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THUMBS UP

German luthiers Warwick have announced the release of a tasty Masterbuilt Thumb NT 5. The spec of this amazing instrument – which retails at €14,948, or around £12,500 depending on the pound's performance in these turbulent times – has to be seen to be believed. The bubinga pommelé body and matching electronics compartment cover is covered with an inch of textured buckeye burl. The matching headstock cover is also made from buckeye burl. The headstock is equipped with Warwick machine heads with wooden tuner buttons and D-tuner. The five-piece laminated wenge neck represents a 'hidden neck through' construction design with a solid buckeye burl top hiding the neck. The 26-fret fingerboard is snakewood and the inlays are illuminated from below by blue LEDs. There's a Just-A-Nut III brass saddle, active MEC J/TJ pickups, three-band EQ and a Fishman piezo pickup system to round it all off. We'll take two.
www.warwick.de

GENIUS

There's a new rock festival on the way which bass players of the heavy rock persuasion may find interesting. Heavycon, to be held at the Birmingham NEC between 30 September and 2 October, features a bunch of head-banging exhibits such as a Motörhead Museum and an exhibition featuring work by Storm Thorgerson and Mark Wilkinson. In addition, Gene Simmons of Kiss is going to be there, showing off a posse of his signature Punisher and Axe series bass guitars (see our Axe review in *BGM* 120, in which Uncle Gene also stars). Steven Wilson, GWAR, Abbath and Jeff Wayne (War of the Worlds) will also be on hand, all from £30 a day.

We asked Gene for a quote and he told us: "You may not have been born a rockstar, but you can sure feel like one. Come on down! Hold my Gene Simmons Axe and Punisher in your sweaty paws. Rub it against your body and release your inner God Of Thunder. Size counts." See you there...
www.theticketfactory.com/heavycon/online

BASSWATCH

Every month, keen bass-spotter Ray Walker brings us an online bargain.
This month: Yamaha Attitude LTD 3

Here we have Billy Sheehan's signature Yamaha. This is the latest model, with a few upgrades from the LTD 2. It sports an alder body and D-shaped, maple neck (think Fender Tele) with Sheehan's distinctive fret markers and scalloped frets above the 17th. It comes with stereo inputs for the DiMarzio split coil and Will Power pickups. The neck is a five-bolt (including two angled bolts) set-up for improved stability and greater resonance. It's got a solid-brass bridge for serious tone and a Hipshot tuner on the E string for that low D growl. Tapping is optional – but recommended...
http://tinyurl.com/ha66vwt

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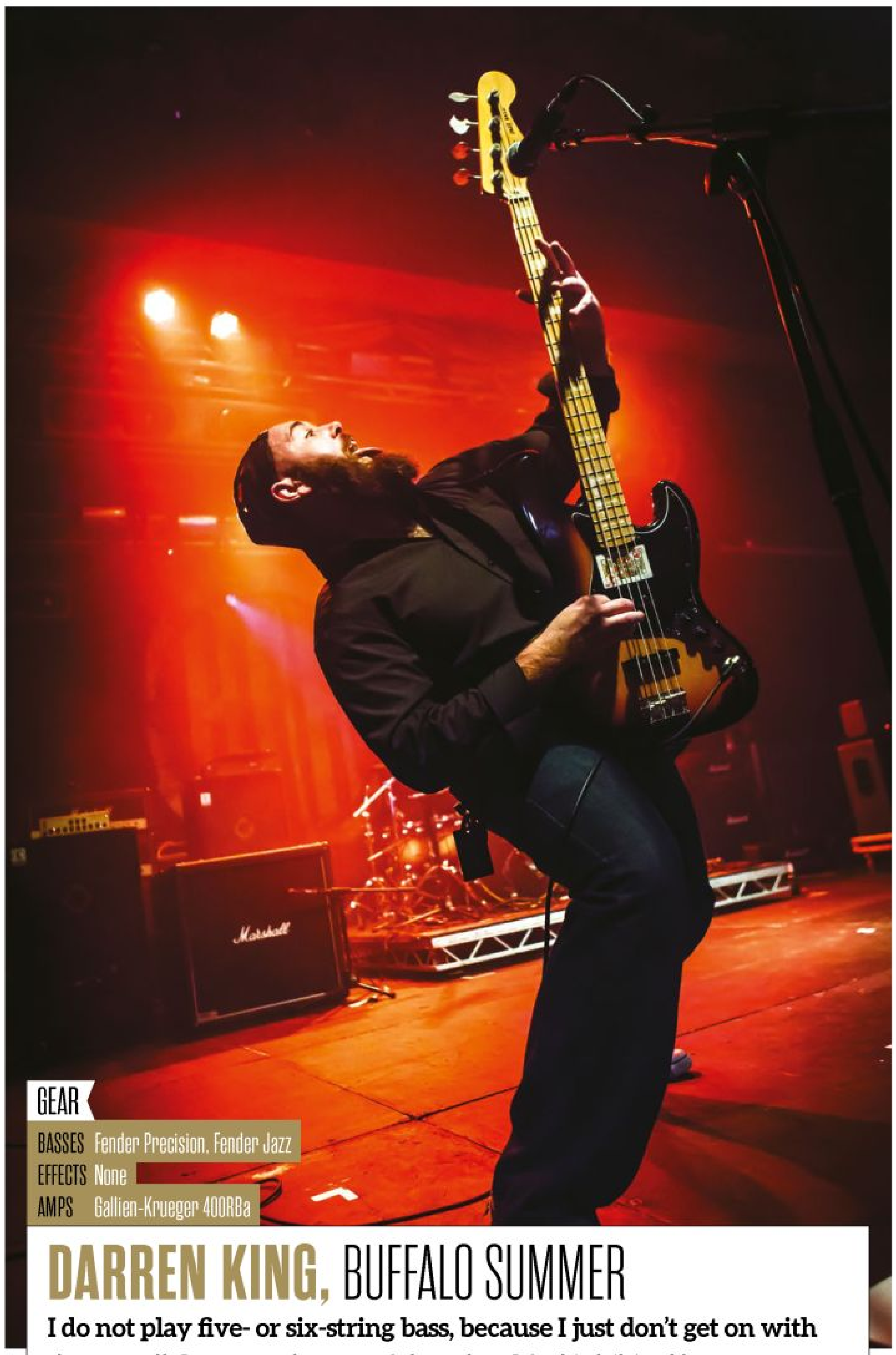
BASSICALLY SPEAKING

Bassists reveal the tricks of their trade faster than a snapping D string



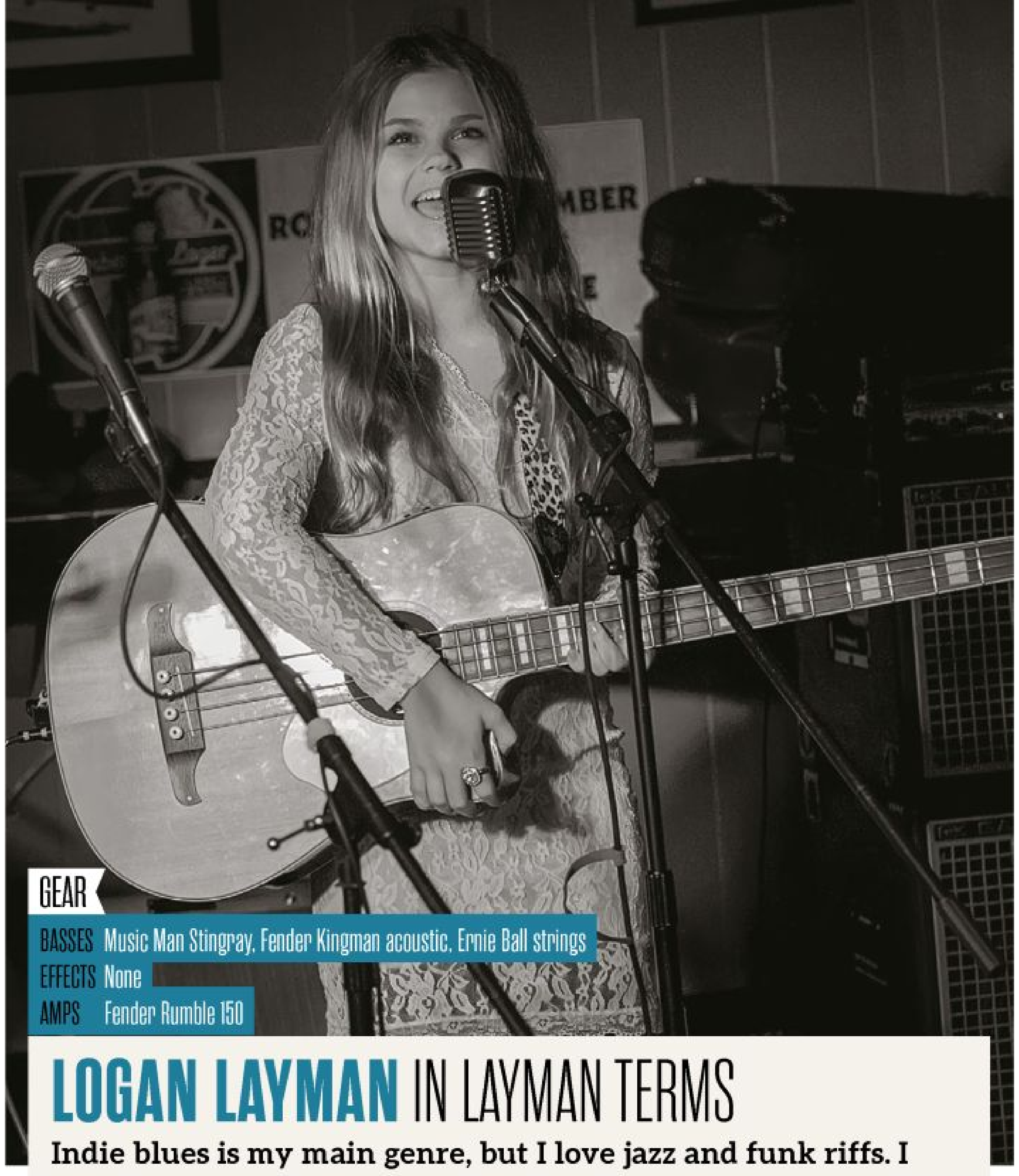
GEAR
BASSES Fender Precision, Fender Jazz
EFFECTS None
AMPS Gallien-Krueger 400RBa

DARREN KING, BUFFALO SUMMER

I do not play five- or six-string bass, because I just don't get on with them at all. I can see the use of them but I feel inhibited by extra strings. I do not slap, because Duff McKagan told me off for doing it once. The secret of playing bass well is playing with discretion and having a profound sense of context. My first bass was some unbranded black Jazz ripoff. It was borderline unplayable. My favourite bass ever, to date, is my 2009 Fender Classic Precision. I've only had it six months. It's revolutionised my playing.

My bass heroes are John Paul Jones, Tim Commerford, Geezer Butler, James Jamerson, Bob Babbit, Donald 'Duck' Dunn, Paul McCartney, Andy Fraser, Glenn Hughes, Ron Blair, Howie Epstein, Nate Watts. All modes are just major and minor pentatonic scales with two extra notes added per position. Learn to recognise what notes are the same in a sequence rather than what notes are different. Buffalo Summer has a new record, *Second Sun*, out now.

www.buffalosummer.net



GEAR
BASSES Music Man Stingray, Fender Kingman acoustic, Ernie Ball strings
EFFECTS None
AMPS Fender Rumble 150

LOGAN LAYMAN IN LAYMAN TERMS

Indie blues is my main genre, but I love jazz and funk riffs. I also play upright bass in orchestra at my school. I use a German bow. When I play electric bass or my acoustic Fender Kingman I do not use a pick. I believe that I have everything I need with four strings. Part of the fun of playing is moving up and down the neck to get the notes I want. I mess around with slapping at home, but don't have the confidence to slap at gigs yet. I am the lead vocalist and when I slap and sing it messes with my phrasing. I am working on it. Practice makes perfect – although no one is perfect. It's a good thing to work towards, though. Also, feel. You have to get outside of your head and not think too hard about doing it right, just feel it and do it.

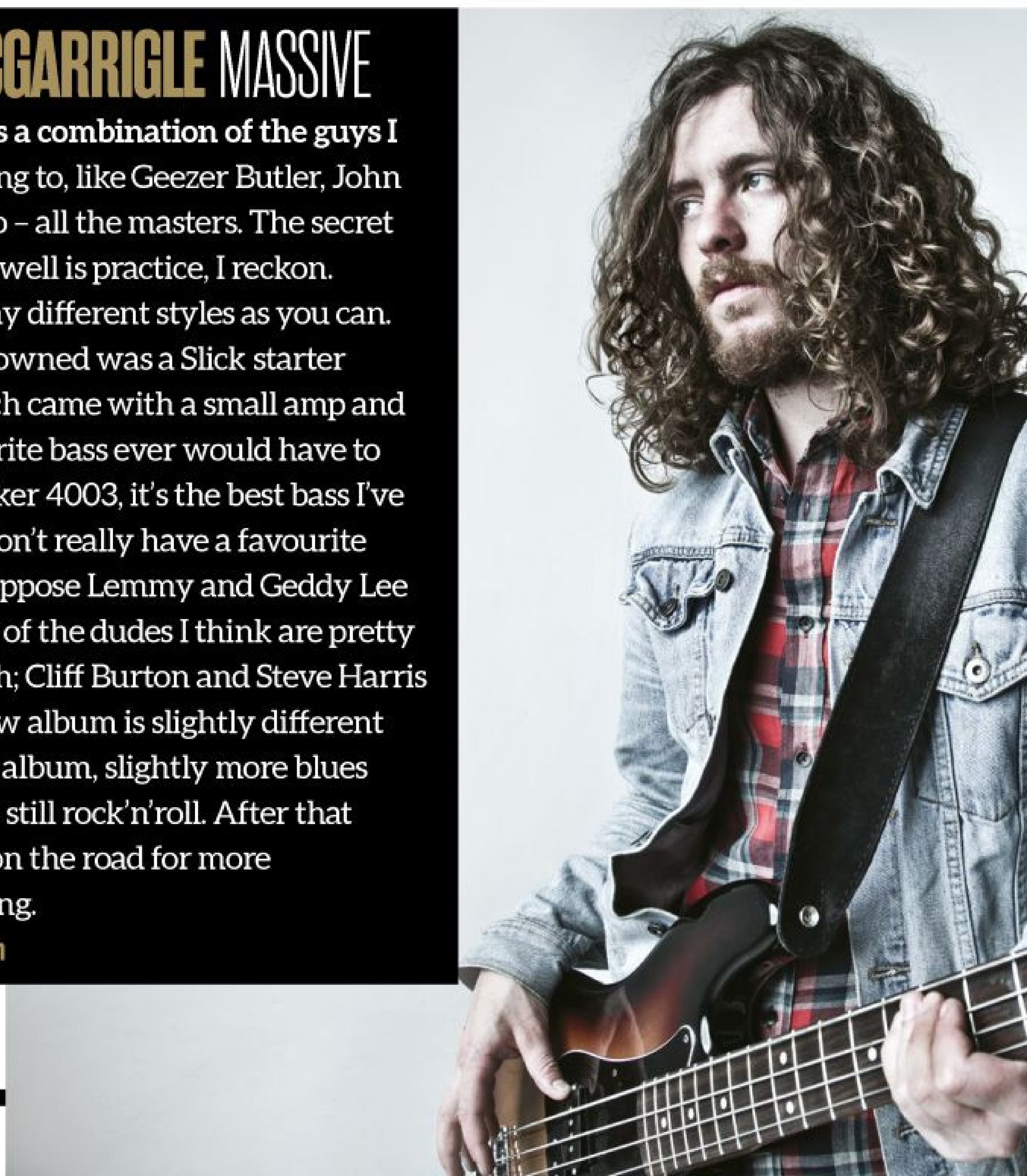
My favourite bass ever, to date, is the one that is being custom-built for me right now. I haven't even played it yet, but I am in love already because I am having it built with exactly everything I want. It's a Music Man Stingray with neck through, high action and EMG pickups. I am sponsored by Ernie Ball and proud to endorse Music Man basses. The greatest bass player that ever lived is Victor Wooten. He doesn't just play bass, he becomes part of the music. I actually got a chance to work with him when I was 10 years old. I went to his Music/Nature Junior camp. It was a life-changing experience for me and really made me see music in a different way. It helped me learn to feel it. We just released our debut album, *Tangled*. We are really excited about it. It's getting airplay all over the world and great reviews.

www.3inlaymanterms.com

AIDAN MCGARRIGLE MASSIVE

My bass style is a combination of the guys I grew up listening to, like Geezer Butler, John Paul Jones, Jaco – all the masters. The secret to playing bass well is practice, I reckon. Practise as many different styles as you can. The first bass I owned was a Slick starter pack bass, which came with a small amp and lead. My favourite bass ever would have to be a Rickenbacker 4003, it's the best bass I've ever played. I don't really have a favourite bass player, I suppose Lemmy and Geddy Lee would be some of the dudes I think are pretty up there though; Cliff Burton and Steve Harris as well. Our new album is slightly different to the previous album, slightly more blues influenced, but still rock'n'roll. After that it will be back on the road for more relentless touring.

www.massiveoz.com



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GEAR
BASSE Fender Precision
EFFECTS None
AMPS Orange OB1-500, Ampeg cab

GREG MCDEVITT CAN'T SWIM

There is just something about five-string basses that I will always associate with braided facial hair and proficiency in devil sticks. We tune all the way down to A standard so I've thought about making the switch, but I've always loved the simplicity in those four strings. I slap my bass all the damn time but you'll probably never hear me doing it on a record. It doesn't fit my band's sound, but it's a style I love to jam out on. Who knows? Maybe Can't Swim can have a few slap bass-lines some day. Every song is different. You need to know when to play and when not to play. In our song 'Your Clothes' the bass is the lead instrument throughout the verses. In that song it works, but sometimes you need to lay back and let the other instruments take over. I dedicated months of my childhood to learning how to play the bass solo in 'Maxwell Murder' so I have to give a shout out to Matt Freeman. What a beast. Our EP *Death Deserves A Name* is out now.

www.cantswimmusic.com

GEAR
BASSES Traben Chaos
EFFECTS Boss LMB-3, Tech21 SansAmp VT
AMPS Gallien-Krueger 700RB-II head with NEO 212-II cab

ROB KNIGHT
CIRCLE OF REASON

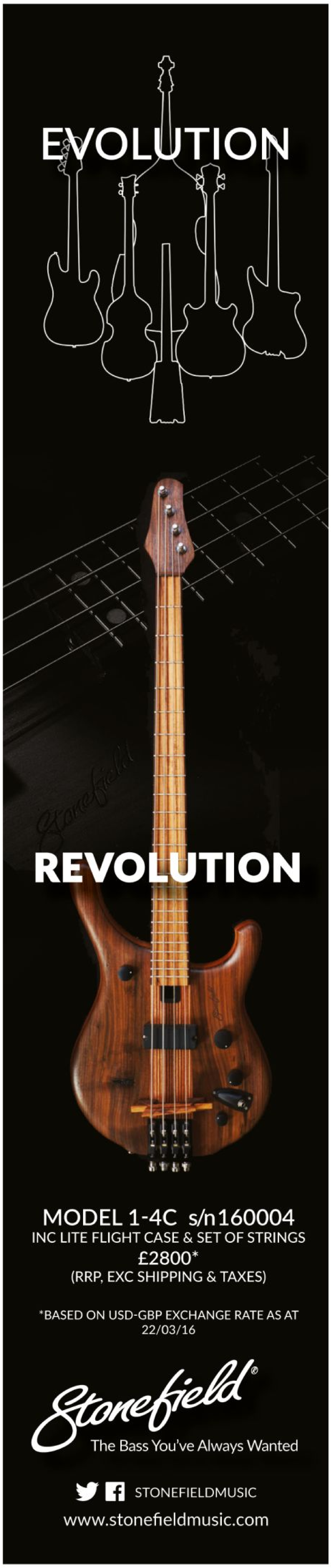
I play fingerstyle and strive for minimum effort and maximum impact. I find myself playing four-, five- and six-string basses for various reasons. I enjoy playing a lot of prog stuff, which generally requires the extra strings. It's also a lot easier in the band when the guys ask me if I can tune down to A. That's just not happening on a four-string unless you want your strings flapping and buzzing all over the place, or you want to change your strings to something thicker halfway through a gig... nope. Knocking down a low B to A isn't so much a problem. Slap is not my cup of tea, I'm afraid, mostly because of the genre of music I play.

> "I KNOW I'LL UPSET SOME PEOPLE HERE, BUT I ALSO CAN'T STAND PEOPLE PLAYING A 20-MINUTE SLAP BASS SOLO"

I've put the effort into learning how to do it, to try and be a well-rounded player, but it's not something I do if I can avoid it. I know I'll upset some people here, but I also can't stand people playing a 20-minute slap bass solo. There's a time and a place for it for sure, but let's not get carried away. I think the secret of playing bass well is playing to match the track. By that I mean, don't be overly complex if the song doesn't need it. Equally, you've got to practise hard so you can play the more intricate parts when required. Also, if you play fingerstyle, keep your nails short to avoid that clipping sound on the strings! My favourite bass is an Ernie Ball Music Man Bongo six-string HH model. The thing is an absolute beast and I call it Thor, God of Thunder. Our new album *Faith Or Theory* is out and we're touring.

www.facebook.com/circleofreason

GEAR
BASSES Fender Precision
EFFECTS None
AMPS Orange MK3 AD20



ALEKS WILSON GHOLD

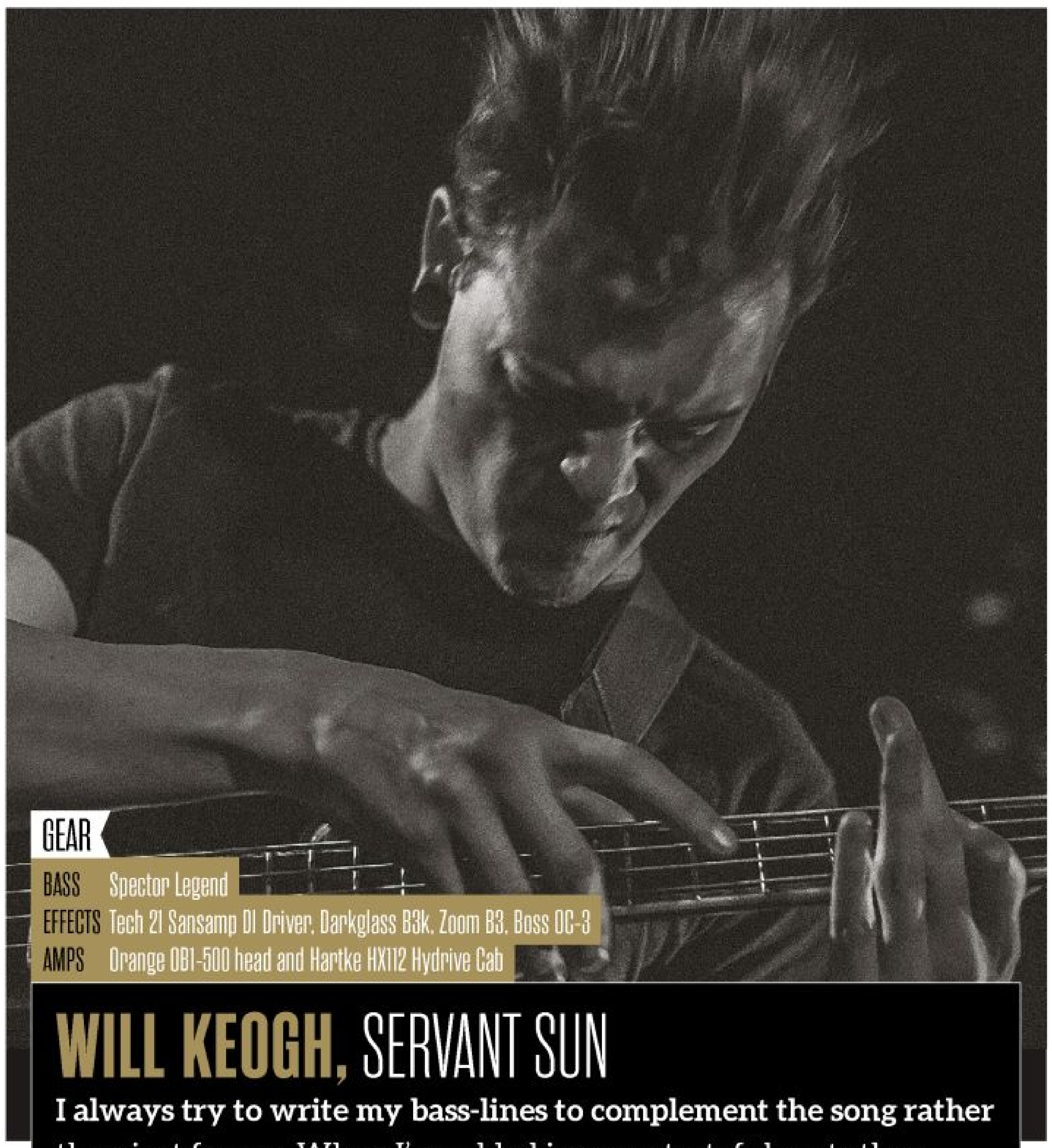
I like heavy hitting and grip picking with a chord-laden, full-fat drive. It has to be loud, but I like to change the dynamics of playing through effects, amps and general technique. I tend to get power through chords and octaves, which, played slow and low, sound and feel huge. Then I introduce the other fingers for overtones and nuance. The four string is all I know, but I'm not precious about varying instruments. I like slim necks, which tend to grow with the number of strings.

Depending on what is needed I may implement a mixture of techniques to achieve the desired effect; I like to use my whole hand, pick, between finger and thumb for the attack and then free up the other fingers for picking and creating overtones. Add some thick fuzz through one amp and a sharp bite through another and you can open up a portal to another dimension. The secret of playing bass well is to think you are playing bass well; self-belief is the only way to enlightenment. That, plus good tone and solid gear. Once you believe, those cheap copies in pawn shops for a tenner can be shredded. Our new album *Pyr* is out on Ritual Productions.

www.ghold.co.uk

© Rebecca Cleal

GEAR
BASSES Dean Cadillac
EFFECTS Boss
AMPS Hiwatt Custom 100, Acoustic Control 230, Peavey 400



GEAR
BASS Spector Legend
EFFECTS Tech 21 Sansamp DI Driver, Darkglass B3k, Zoom B3, Boss OC-3
AMPS Orange OB1-500 head and Hartke HX112 Hydrive Cab

WILL KEOGH, SERVANT SUN

I always try to write my bass-lines to complement the song rather than just for me. When I've added in some tasteful parts they always stand out – rather than when I've thrown in as many techniques as possible over a full song. Used properly, slap can really bring out some sections, especially when it's locked in with the drummer. Our new track, 'Taste Of Silver', when played live, has an end section where me and the drummer Will lock in with a tasty muted slap section. My first bass was a no-name four-string that my uncle gave me when I was 16. I have an early memory of hearing the No Doubt album *Tragic Kingdom* and thinking 'yes, I must learn this'. Cue lots of rewinding and wrong notes. I originally tried to learn with a pick but it just didn't feel right, so I switched to fingerstyle and never looked back. My favourite bass to date is the one that I'm playing right now, a Spector Legend four-string: it's so versatile and has such a warm punchy tone. The low end is meaty and adds weight even when both our guitarists have crazy distorted octave effects on, but when I am higher up the register for the melodic sections, it cuts right through and sounds so clean. The greatest bass player that ever lived for me is Ben Kenney from Incubus. His songwriting skills, use of melody in his chops and overall showmanship win it for me. Servant Sun have a new EP called *Hundred Waves* out.

www.facebook.com/servantsun

GEAR
BASSES Custom Waghorn Sauria-B, American Fender Standard Precision
EFFECTS Cog Effects Grand Tarkin MKII Fuzz
AMPS Orange Crush 100BXT

DANNY EVERS, PERFECT CRIMES

I'm a very enthusiastic player and like to avoid playing the same as the guitarist when possible, as I'm a firm believer in bass being a kick-ass instrument that deserves recognition instead of the 'just bass' attitude many people have towards it. I love playing slap bass. Being in a hard rock band I don't really get the chance to play it, though, so I tend to play slap when I'm at home. The key to playing bass well is to listen to lots of different music. If you're open-minded about music you open yourself up to a much greater pool of influences. My first bass was a Squier P-Bass I got when I was about 10, which I used for quite a while before buying a second-hand BC Rich Platinum Mockingbird when I was a bit older. My favourite bass is my custom Waghorn made by Tom Waghorn in Bristol. I'm a huge P-Bass fan as my other bass is an American Fender Standard, so Tom made the neck measurements the same as my P-Bass and added custom Delano pickups so I can get the classic P-Bass tone as well as a J-Bass and Stingray tone. My bass heroes are Steve Harris, Chris Wolstenholme (a fellow Rotherham lad) and Geezer Butler. The greatest bass player that ever lived is Geddy Lee. His bass-lines are constantly mesmerising, and it's doubly impressive that he can play them while singing, something I'm envious of. My band Perfect Crimes are currently writing and aiming to release a new EP by the end of the year, following our previous singles 'Black Cloud' and 'Bastion'. We draw inspiration from the classic grunge era as well as the modern hard-rock elite, and I guess you could say we sound like Alter Bridge if they'd started out in 1992.

www.facebook.com/PerfectCrimesUK

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GEAR
BASSES Fender Precision with Seymour Duncan SPB-3 pickups, Yamaha Attitude II, Ibanez SR800 with EMG-X pickups, Music Man Stingray, Elites Stadium Series strings
EFFECTS MXR M87 compressor, EBS Billy Sheehan distortion, Digitech XBC Multichorus
AMPS Ashdown ABM 500 EVO III head, Gallien-Krueger 4x10 Neo cabs

PAUL O'SHEA CONTROL THE STORM

I don't play five- or six-string basses because of an OCD I have. If I need to borrow someone else's bass at a gig, I feel safe knowing that my entire repertoire can be played on pretty much any bass. I also like to keep things as simple as possible. The secret of playing bass well is understanding the role of the bass. In a band situation, I tend to look at the bass as the instrument that glues the guitars and drums together. Learning to read music and also transcribing other people's songs by ear will help you immensely. My first bass was a copy of a Precision bass by a company called Westfield. It had a very high action and must have made my fingers very strong. I bought a real Precision bass about three years later and it was so much easier to play. The reason I started playing was because of Steve Harris. There are so many great bassists, but the ones that stand out besides Steve would be Geddy Lee, Billy Sheehan, Mark King, Geezer Butler, John Deacon and Flea. View music and bass playing as a form of self expression, not a competition. I'm now in an awesome melodic metal band called Control The Storm. We're currently working on our second album. The new stuff sounds epic and I can't wait for people to hear it. I'm also playing most weekends in an AC/DC tribute band called Hells Bells.

www.facebook.com/controlthestorm

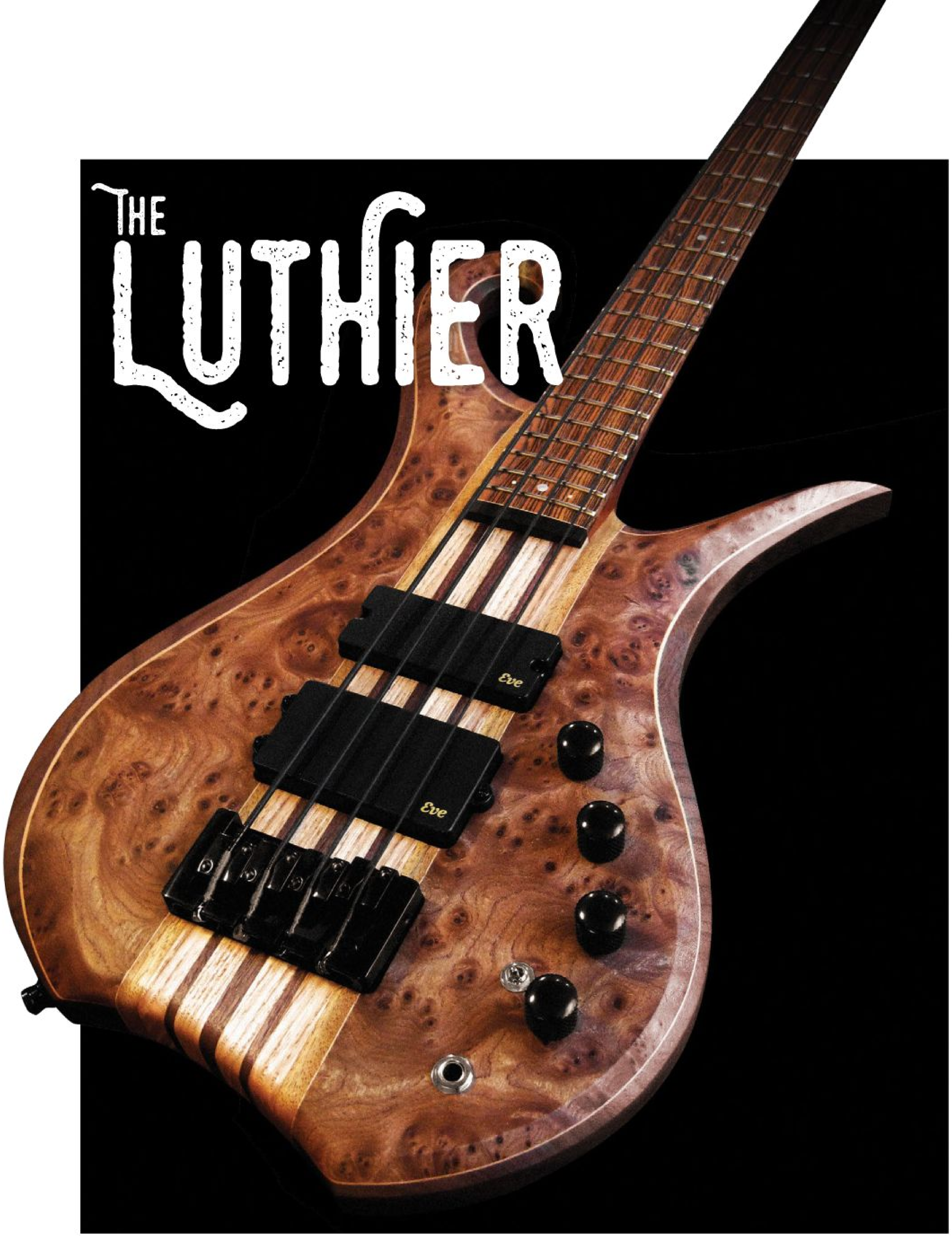
GEAR
BASSES Peavey Zodiac BXP, Fender Precision
EFFECTS Big Muff, Boss DS-1, Boss Overdrive
AMPS Ampeg and Laney combos

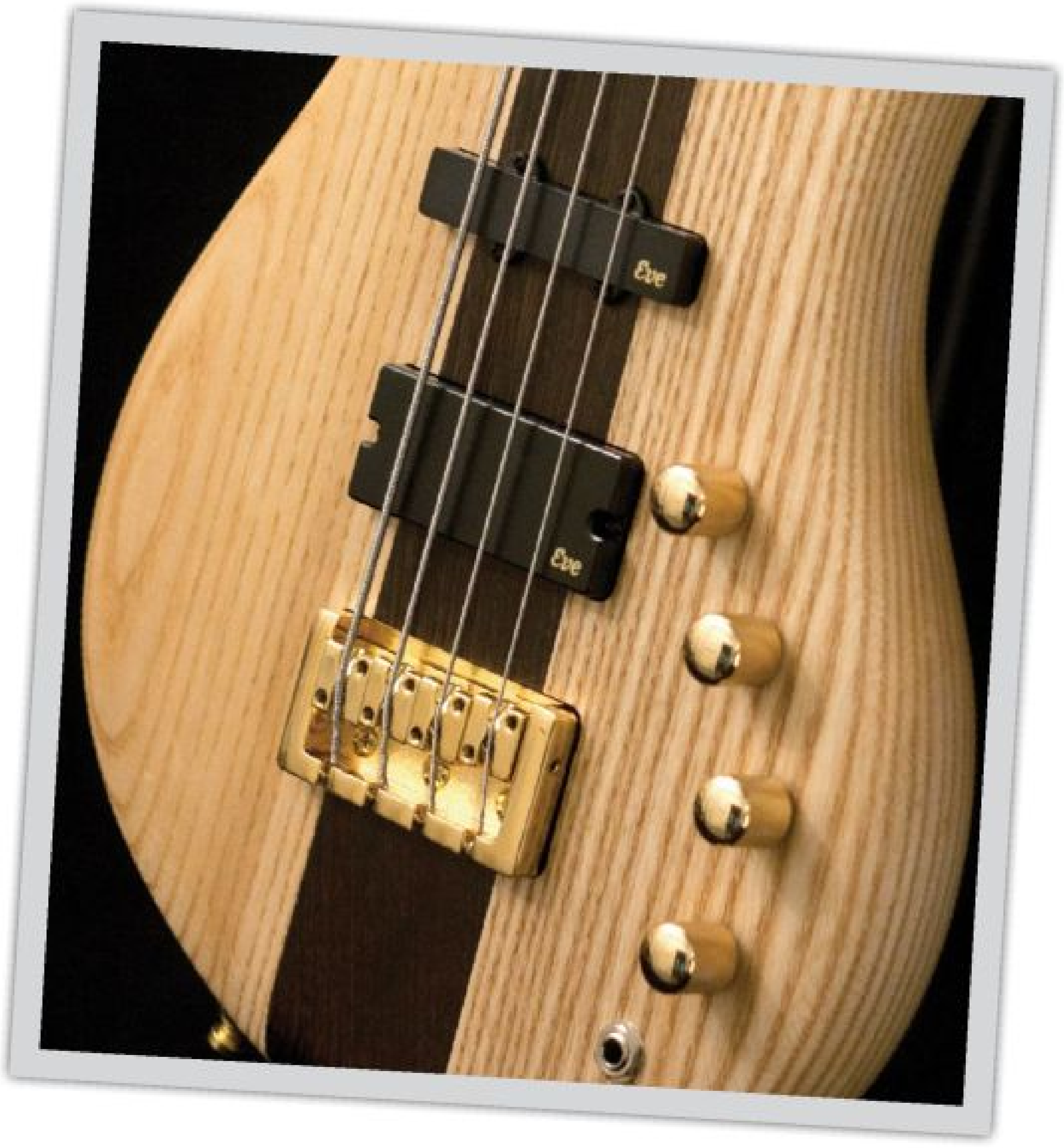
SHAUNA TOHILL REWS

I like to really complement the song and only add a sprinkle of craziness when it needs the extra salt. I do not play five- or six-string bass. I've nothing against them at all, I've just never really had one. I tried my friend's five- and six-string once and I felt like my hand was just too small to work around it. I realised at that point I like a thinner neck and fewer strings to work with. It's nice to get those really deep bottom notes on a five-string… it just depends what you're going for. I quite enjoy trying to slap the bass. It's really fun – my dad was a great slap bass player and loved Mark King. I do it during soundchecks and when I'm generally playing around. I don't use the technique when playing my songs as the style wouldn't really suit. The secret of playing bass well is to really listen and feel it. Play simply and ensure you have a good connection with the drummer and other musicians. My first bass was a Yamaha RBX270J. I absolutely loved it. The action was nice and low and it had a really delicious tone too, plus I felt it looked really rockin'! I still use it from time to time. I do really love a Fender Precision bass. They are beaut and always have a good tone, but I am rocking a Peavey Zodiac BXP at the moment. Our new single 'Shake Shake' is out now.

www.rewsmusic.com

THE LUTHIER





Take it to the bridge, says ace luthier Doug Mullen of Eve Guitars

In my last column we discussed two of the most important parts of designing a bass, the nut and the bridge, and focused on the importance of the nut. This month I'd like to concentrate on the bridge and its impact on the design and sound properties of the instrument.

When we at Eve Guitars design a new bass, we decide on the string spacing of both the nut and the bridge and draw a line on a large sheet of paper, marking the scale length along with the outside string measurements of the nut and the bridge. This gives us the precise string spacing along the resonance of the string scale, to which we add the required additional space either side of each string for the fingerboard – anywhere between 3mm to 5mm depending on the type of instrument required. If you compare the necks of a Fender Precision and a Jazz, you'll notice the latter is quite a bit thinner, especially at the nut. The advantage of designing a bass from scratch is that you can tailor this measurement to suit your own individual preference and playing style.

Since most of the action in the playing position centres around the bottom third of the bass, the bridge position and string spacing are of the utmost importance. In days gone by, basses came with pretty flimsy stock bridges that were typically seen as simply anchor points for the bridge saddles, and that was about it. Thankfully, in these more enlightened times, we are much more aware of the subtleties of components that contribute to our overall sound. Most of the players I know replace the stock configuration in mass-produced instruments with aftermarket specialist parts, the bridge usually being the first thing to go.

The main reason for this is a demand for a more substantial bridge, or 'hi-mass' as it's usually known. Usually these bridges are made of some compound of brass, but other alloys are becoming commonplace, so there are good options if you know what you're looking for. The perceived rationale for this is more sustain from the instrument, as the theory is that a heavier, thicker bridge will result in a tighter, more pronounced sound with more vibration and sustain. On the face of it, this makes perfect sense; however, in the field, your mileage may vary and like most things, the difference can be quite subjective and simply down to personal preference.

There are two main types of bridge: through the body and top-loading styles are the most common. At Eve Guitars, we like to offer the best of both with a high-mass quick release top-loading bridge which is countersunk into the body. We have been using Spector bridges for several years, and believe these offer great tone and are rather chunky and substantial: you definitely know there's a bridge there! Hi-mass bridges also have an advantage of having a bit more weight, which can be an advantage in the overall balance of the bass, as long as the total weight of the instrument is not prohibitive from a playing perspective.

We have now discussed the pivotal starting points in designing a bass; scale length, the nut and the bridge. These seemingly obvious areas are vital in the success of an instrument and should never be overlooked. Next issue, we'll begin to look at the material and design of neck composition.

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Applied Improvisation with Rockschool

Altered Studies part II with Rockschool's Nik Preston

If you've managed to internalise some of the altered scale content from my last column, congratulations – because you've tackled some challenging vocabulary, both technically and harmonically.

Obviously a quartal study involves a lot of large intervals and string crossing. The opposite of this angular approach involves phrases of a chromatic nature – in other words, made predominantly of semi-tones. While still using the altered scale as the context, **example 1** demonstrates a quartal phrase over a G7 altered chord, whereas **example 2** is purely a line of semi-tones starting on the root and ending on the major third.

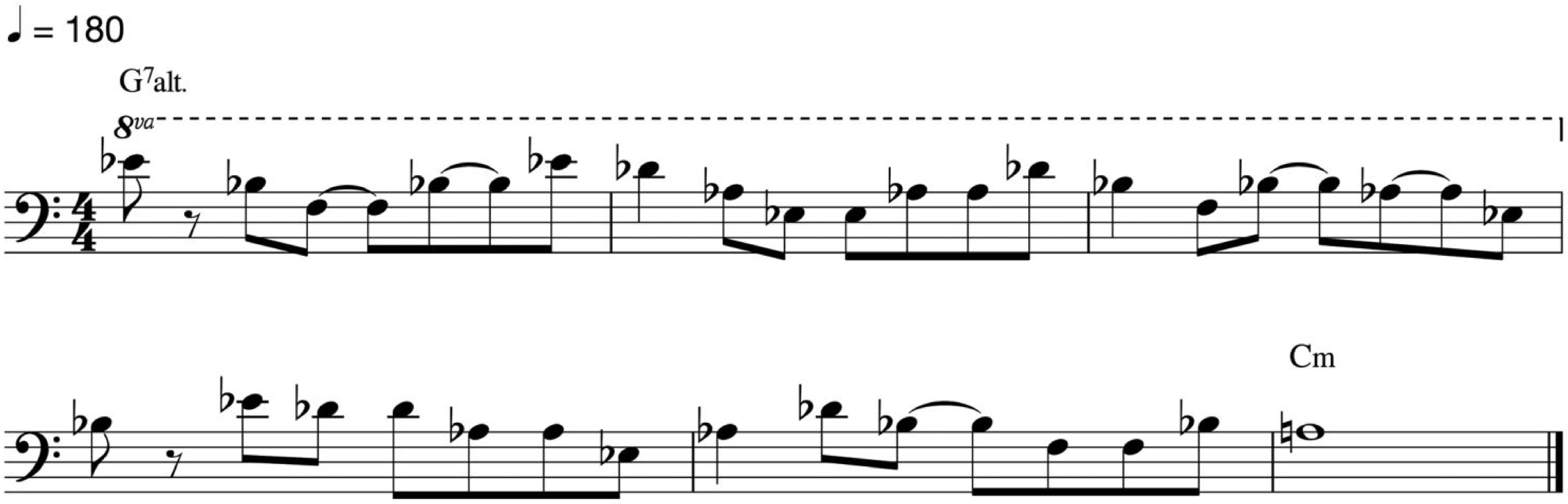
A good rule of thumb when developing chromatic vocabulary is to play chord tones, or harmonically correct extensions on strong beats and include chromatic/non-harmonic tones on the off beat/syncopated parts of the bar. This approach will hold true for all chord/scale types, but as you can see in **example 2** there is a scale tone from G altered scale on every beat, interspersed by chromatic notes placed on the off-beat parts of the bar.

Example 3 shows a chromatic lick starting on the b9 (Ab) of G7 alt and resolving to a b3 (Eb) of a C minor chord before proceeding to ascend a 1st inversion C minor triad and finish on the 9th (D). This is a very short example of how you can combine both chromaticism and larger intervals within a phrase.

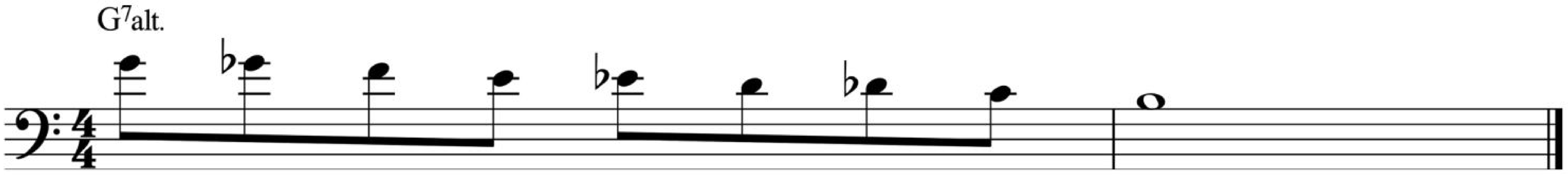
The smart move, as always, is to develop a fundamental knowledge and technique, based around all interval types within any scale or mode. This obviously requires some tenacity and time, but if you always set yourself short-term, achievable goals (such as developing more chromatic options over dominant chords), you'll always have something specific that you can work on and you can often improve your vocabulary at what is quite an astonishing rate.

The big guy will be back next month, so until then choose the interval, the scale type and the key and make sure that you don't leave the practice room until you have more options than those you went in with!

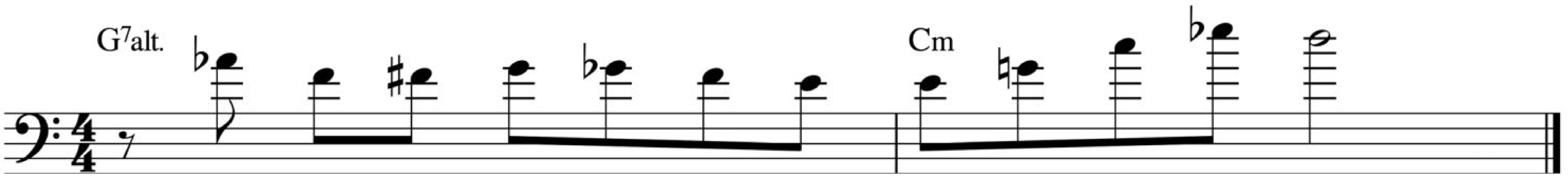
EXAMPLE 1



EXAMPLE 2



EXAMPLE 3



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THE MU

You've got the gig, now what about the digs, ask the MU

Booking reasonably priced, convenient and safe accommodation for after a show – whether it's a one-nighter in a far-flung town or part of a longer run – is a perennial worry. Working a long way from friends and family requires a special resilience, and landing up in sub-standard accommodation run by indifferent owners can turn even a dream engagement into a living nightmare. But it doesn't have to be like that.

The Digs List

Need to find a place to stay? Your first port of call is the venue's digs list – its catalogue of approved flats, rooms, bed and breakfasts and hotels. If you're staying in someone's house, it is important to establish ground rules early on. You should ask about details such as when the owner wants to be paid, access, spare keys, and let them know the times of day or night you are likely to be working. Musicians on long engagements also need to discuss how and when friends and family are able to visit.

Demand for good digs often outstrips supply. Book early if you can. If you can't get something off the digs list then you will have time to look elsewhere. If a venue doesn't have a digs list, it's not the end of the world. Specialist websites for theatrical digs and social media communities dedicated to finding accommodation can help you out.

Try Sharing

If you're going with a group, you may find renting a house a better option. "We realised we could rent a house for a week and that worked out cheaper and better," says Jamie Pullman, MU Regional Officer for East & South East England.

"Good digs probably don't make an enormous amount of difference to your performance, but they do make an enormous amount of difference to your wellbeing and quality of life. It can be a miserable experience sitting in a B&B all day. That's why renting a house is so much better. It gives you a much more homely feel."

Location, Location, Location

The nearer you are to your venue, the better. If you are forced to stay further out, think about how you are going to get to the venue and back. Are you driving or car sharing? In which case, where can you park? Is there public transport? And how long will it take?

Security is another concern when booking somewhere to stay. The lack of affordable accommodation close to venues can mean long walks back to digs after a performance. It's advisable to find somewhere as close as possible to the venue, and arrange to walk back with others if you can.

Surviving on a Pittance

When booking, talk to the accommodation provider and be direct with them. See if you can get a discount rate. There's no harm in asking, and they are more likely to offer preferential rates to people with whom they have had direct contact.

You may have to pay in advance, or at the least a deposit. It's a big ask for musicians on increasingly tight budgets – whether that's an allowance or coming out of your own pocket – and you need to take that into account when organising your tour or trip.

Get in Touch

We're working to take some of the guesswork out of life on the road. Have you worked at a venue with a really good digs list? Let us know via **theMU.org/contact**.

BASSCHAT

Basschat's Silvia Bluejay heads down to the Marketplace

As well as the discussion forum we all know and love, Basschat also has a thriving second hand Marketplace for music gear, neatly divided into sections such as Bass Guitars (with separate subforums for left- and right-handed instruments), Amps and Cabs, Effects, and so on. We can ogle and covet items to suit any budget, from expensive boutique bass guitars, uprights and big cabs to cheaper pedals, cables, scratchplates, bows and gigbags. Even strings get sold second hand, which is pretty handy in the case of expensive sets for double bass.

We also have a section dedicated to selling non-music related objects with the purpose of financing music purchases, and one dedicated to recycling, which we use to give away to our fellow forum members items of low value, or which are in poor condition and only good for spares, or to pass on items originally received and enjoyed as freebies.

The Marketplace is our temple of Gear Acquisition Syndrome. Buying second hand from trusted fellow Basschatters is a convenient way to own and gig (in series rather than all at the same time) as many different instruments and accessories as humanly possible, without breaking the bank in the process. Since purchases are often driven by GAS rather than sheer necessity, some of us apply the 'one in, one out' rule, which states that each new purchase must be balanced out by a sale. While that keeps the Marketplace very lively, it's not uncommon for a Basschatter to sell, and then buy back, the same bass a few weeks or months down the line, sometimes more than once. What can we say? True love always wins.

The brands and characteristics of the items for sale at any given time appear to be subject to identifiable trends. Alongside three or four omnipresent classic names, some previously rare brands or types of gear seemingly flood our Marketplace some time after a new fashion sweeps Basschat. Luthiers hitherto unknown until one Basschatter discovers them, orders a bass and posts photos and reviews, will often find themselves suddenly swamped with requests. And then a new kid appears on the block, and the more adventurous (or fickle) among us promptly sell our recent purchases and move on.

The same happens with up-and-coming effect manufacturers and cab builders – especially if the cabs in question are lightweight! Sometimes even costly custom builds from renowned companies are put on the market by the previously proud owners, when they fall out of love with them or fall in love with another model (finding another loving home is no trouble).

Companies and dealers are also welcome to sell their wares in our Marketplace, but only in the dedicated section called Affiliates, where they can advertise new models, spread the word about special offers, or simply sell their normal stock to a GAS-ridden, enthusiastic and captive audience. The only requirement is that they should offer a small Basschat-only discount or gift.

Affiliates is also where companies can request Basschatters' opinions as real-life, gigging end-users before putting something on the market, usually either by providing free samples and inviting us to write reviews, or by asking targeted questions in specially created threads. We always oblige, not just because we love helping fellow forum members, but also because we simply can't resist trying new stuff – and giving our reasoned, informed and very detailed opinions to whoever will listen!

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ictory

BGM meets Victor Wooten, the man who many regard as the world's greatest bassist. Read on for some unexpected opinions on the thumbs, the drums – and heavy metal...

Words: Andy Hughes and Joel McIver **Pictures:** Olly Curtis

If you ever get a chance to sit down, drink tea and chat with Victor Wooten, as we did when he was touring the UK last month, take it. The man is a total pleasure to be with. Interested in music for its own sake and not giving a toss for ancillary things like fame and fortune, Wooten takes his time to answer our questions comprehensively and properly, whether we're discussing his solo career or his work with artists and bands such as Béla Fleck & The Flecktones.

A lover of the bass guitar, but not obsessed with the technology as so many of us are (including us here at *BGM*, we admit it), Wooten is like many other absolute masters of their craft in that he sees the big picture in everything. Ask him about bass education and he'll frame his answer in a metaphor about learning a language. Inquire about his signature Fodera basses and he'll reply with examples of intuitive synergy. This is no ordinary musician.

For most bassists, Wooten is above all known for his incredible plucking, slapping and popping speed, and his grasp of jazz and funk harmony and melody. Those elements form a huge part of his style, and they are the primary reason for his commercial success, at least in our community – but, rest assured, there's so much more to him than sheer chops. He's forgotten way, way more than any of us could ever hope to know about bass – and he's proud to admit that he's still learning. Let's go!

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How is business in 2016, Victor?

It's a great place to be, but it takes a lot of attention. I'd like to just focus on music, but you can't do that nowadays because you have to be aware of so many different entities. It's really about promotion these days. People don't want to buy music anymore, so how are you going to make a living? The answer is that you have to reach them on different levels. Music might be the first level, but people also want a back door into your life, meaning that they want to talk to you personally on Twitter. They want to see the pictures that you took on your phone on Instagram. There's a lot of messaging. I enjoy it because I like people and I like being in touch with my fans, but it does take a lot of time and mental attention.

How many basses have you brought out on this tour?

I bring out two Foderas, and the other bassist in my band, Anthony Wellington, has two as well. His are five-strings, mine are fours. One of my four-strings is a tenor, tuned A to C.

Tell us about your signature Fodera basses.

We found each other in 1983, and I've never looked in any other direction ever since. Don't get me wrong, everywhere you look now there are loads of companies making really great basses, but to me it's like a good pair of sweatpants and a T-shirt. If it's comfortable, you stick with it, and I find their basses really comfortable.

I was recording with my brothers around New Jersey in the 1980s, working with a funk producer. The producer didn't want me to use the Olympic bass that I was using at the time; he wanted me to use the bass that he had brought to the studio. I didn't really care for the bass the producer gave me to play for the session; I found it clunky and hard to work with. Another guy working at the studio told me that some friends of his were working in the area, making basses, should he give them a call? So I said yes.

It turned out that this was Fodera's first year manufacturing basses, and back then I wasn't with the Flecktones, no one knew who I was. That was the day I switched to playing Fodera basses: the guy let me keep it until I was able to send him the money. For a guy to let an unknown black kid walk away with a bass and a promise to send the money, that was something special then, and I have never forgotten it. Since then, working with the Fodera has influenced my playing, and now they are one of the top basses to get. They're still hand-made, and a lot of the top guys want to get them.

I have a Signature model that is the same design as my first bass I got from them in 1983: it was number 037. The other Signature is my Ying-Yang model, which has a ying-yang symbol design on it that I asked for, and that's the model that I'm recognised for playing.

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"Fans want to see the pictures that you took on your phone on Instagram. There's a lot of messaging. I enjoy it because I like people and I like being in touch with my fans"

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How do you and Anthony divide up the bass parts when you play live?
Ninety-nine per cent of the time, he's the bass player. He covers that role. I may be playing the bass instrument, but I'll be playing more melodies and solos. Sometimes I'll also go down and take the bass role, though.

What does Anthony bring to the table that you don't, bass-wise?
Well, he has his own voice. Like if we're talking, we can say the same thing but we won't sound the same. You can tell that he and I have influenced each other, though. We've been playing together for a long time, since 1998 or 1999. But music is just a part of it when you're touring: it has a lot to do with personalities. You develop a heightened awareness in this band, because you want to play with people who know very quickly what you want. It can almost seem telepathic to an audience.

How has the role of the bass guitar changed over your career?
The bass is a supportive instrument: its role is to support other instruments and voices, and it's not designed to get a lot of attention. It's designed to be in the background, to be the foundation of the band, and uphold the other musicians. It's a bit like the foundations of a building – no one walks into a building and comments on the foundations, unless you happen to know a lot about building construction, and the general public does not usually think about that. But the foundation has to be the strongest part and without it, there is no building. So in the band, the bass has to be the strongest part, but by design it is not meant to be out at the front.

But over the years, as the musicians have grown, so the instruments have grown, and the bass has grown alongside that. If you put the bass guitar in the hands of a good musician, there is no telling what a bass guitar can do. The awareness of what the bass can do is growing, and that's because the role and the capability of the instrument has grown because of the increasing ability of the musicians who are around now.

Sum up your approach to the bass for us.
Basically, my approach is that I play like a drummer. I hear drum rhythms when I'm playing. As a kid, I started learning drum solos and drum beats on my bass. I think any little boy who wants to get into music likes to beat on a drum, and that was me, but we already had a drummer in our family, so I worked out my drum patterns on my bass. I used to learn Billy Cobham solos, Lenny White licks, that sort of thing, and I literally learned them on the bass. I found that the best way to get the sound I wanted was to play with my thumb like Larry Graham. That worked, but it wasn't fast enough for me, I wanted to get the drum fills and the cymbal crashes in there as well.

How did you develop your double thumbing technique?
That started when my brother Regi, who is a guitar player, showed me how to use my thumb in two directions, like a guitar pick. That opened up a whole new world right there, because I realised straight away that I could double my speed without doubling my motion. I was already thumbing and plucking like Larry Graham, but I learned how to pluck with multiple fingers. I found I could make the downstroke with my thumb, the upstroke with my thumb immediately after, and at the same time I could pluck with my index finger and my little finger. That gave me four strong notes together with no extra motion and very little extra effort. A whole new universe of styles opened up for me, it was just like a light going on. I was about nine or ten when this new style came along.

I started to wonder: if I could do that with no extra motion, how many notes could I get if I used my other fingers as well? I did refine it down to plucking with just two fingers, and using my thumb in the up-and-down motion. What if I then put in a hammer-on note as well? A typical playing pattern for me is to pluck down with my thumb, hammer-on with my left hand for a note, and then either pluck back up again with my thumb, or with one finger.

If I play an E with my thumb on the seventh fret of the A string, I will hammer-on the A note first, but that's just a percussive sound, and then play the E with my thumb, and then pluck another note with one finger, so that gives a triplet. So you get a rhythmic sound, then two notes really quickly, and then I can add another pluck in with another finger straight away. If I add an upstroke with my thumb, that can be another note right there, so you can have a quintuplet and all you see is my hand go down once and up once.

That is the basis of the technique I use. I can pluck more than once, thumb more than once and hammer-on more than once really quickly, and the movement is still just down and up. When you add pitches in, you have a whole range of notes and sounds you can get on your

"It's a matter of being able to deliver what the music requires, or what is wanted by the musicians you are working with"

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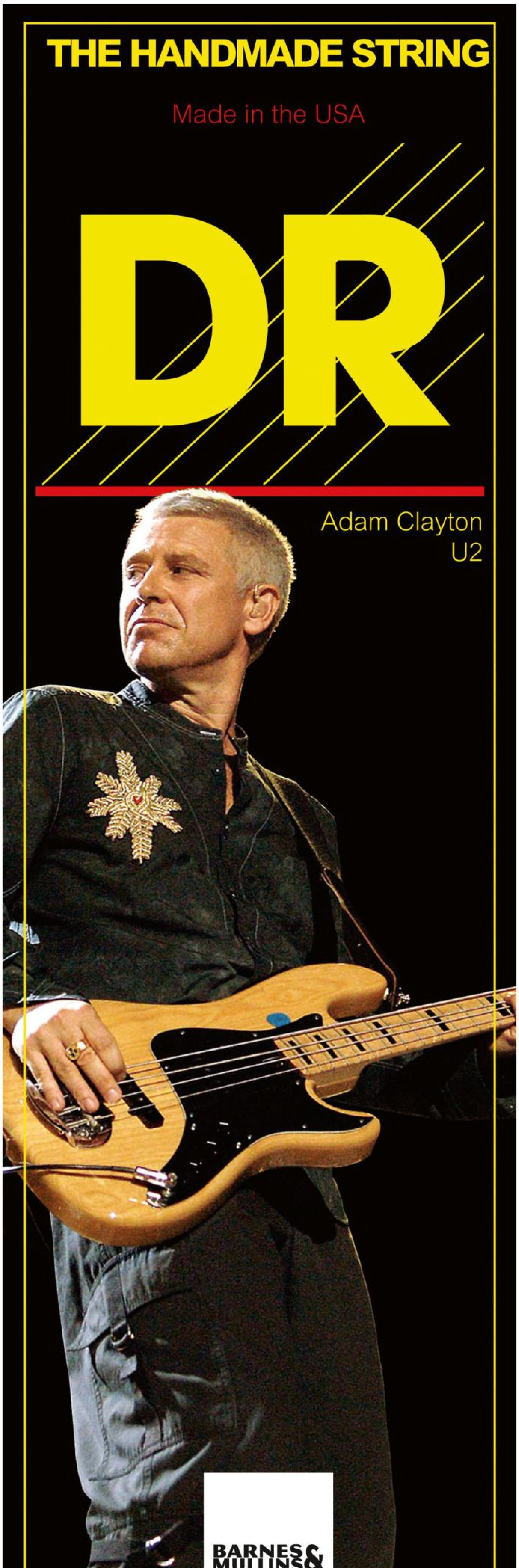

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"As a kid, I started learning drum solos and drum beats on my bass. I think any little boy who wants to get into music likes to beat on a drum"

bass, you can have rhythms going, lead lines, all sorts of things right there with that technique.

Were you the first musician to apply these techniques to the bass?
I don't know, and I don't care! All I was doing was using something I needed to get my playing right. Let me put it this way: I was the first person I heard ever do it on a bass, but I can't believe that of all the musicians in the world, there hasn't been someone who has figured it out before I did. When I first saw Abe Laboriel, he was doing a lot of the stuff I was doing, but *when* he started doing it, I don't know. I don't believe he got his technique from me, because he does it totally differently.

But I don't care if I was the first – that's not what I'm trying to do. I'm just looking to play the music that I hear. I've been very fortunate in always being in a musical setting that has allowed me to explore and expand my playing and my technique, first of all in a band with my brothers, and then for the last 20-something years with Béla Fleck & The Flecktones.

Do you have a large collection of basses?
I don't claim to collect basses, but all of a sudden I do find that I've got a collection! I always said to myself that I would not keep basses that didn't get played, and just sat around the house, but over the years, that has kinda happened. I guess I have around 30, which is not a huge number, but I may be surprised if I came to count them – there may be 50.

Do you use effects?
I do, although I use them more with my own band because the bass is the lead instrument there. I use reverbs, delays, envelope filters, anything that any other instrument might use. I use some of the less obvious items like compression and chorus pedals, things that give me another voice. I will try anything and everything, because there is still plenty of invention going on out there all the time.

Loop pedals are becoming very popular right now; I use one a lot for a solo performance. It's just like having another musician playing, if you use it correctly. A lot of bass players over-use the loop, though, and that causes problems because you need to thin out the frequency. People expect the bass to have a lot of bottom-end frequency because that anchors the music well, and makes people dance. If you loop a lot of those heavy bottom-end sounds it gets really sludgy and sounds messy.

The trick is to think like a whole band, not like three or four bass players. So when I put down the first loop, it's a bass pattern, but the next one will be chords for the top-end sound, another can be a rhythm, another can be a melody, thinking like a whole band makes for a better sound.

Do you play all configurations of bass guitar – five and six-strings, fretless, upright and so on?
I do play all of them, because being a bass player is a role that is bigger than the instrument. Because I want to absorb the complete role, I know that I may need to play more than a standard four-string fretted bass. A soul session may require that low B from a five-string because they like that low end sound. A fusion band may require the higher register, or fretless, or a double bass or a keyboard bass. To feel comfortable as a bass player, I feel I need to be comfortable on all those instruments, and I can play enough to get the job done on the less standard selections, and my comfort zone is the four-string fretted bass.

What advice can you give *BGM* readers who want to get into session bass playing?
It's a matter of being able to deliver what the music requires, or what is wanted by the musicians you are working with. I recently did a recording session for [R&B artist] India Arie, and I did it on an old Fender. The producer said he loved it, but could I reproduce the entire recording on a stand-up bass? The answer is that I could, and I did, and you are available for more work as a studio musician if you are adaptable like that. Technology has changed recording a lot in recent years, there is software you can buy that will replicate a full studio in your bedroom with a laptop, and you can get a sample of a bass player, so why employ a real bass player? The simple answer is, if you have a personal style and a feel that a computer sample can't replicate, then you will find work as a studio musician.

I also think it is important for players not to lose sight of the role of the instrument. There are a lot of young players now who are coming to the bass from the technical point of view, and then struggling to work out the role of the instrument afterwards. People like Stanley, Marcus, Larry Graham, myself, we came from the bass role side of things, supporting a band, making the groove for the band to ride, making the sound good. Now you get guys who can do wonderful solo pieces, but the feel is just not as good, the timing is not as good. It's like having icing before you have cake, painting before you can draw. You need to learn the role first, and build from there, that's the best way to approach playing the bass.

Are you a fan of many different genres of music?
Definitely. The coolest thing I've ever seen was

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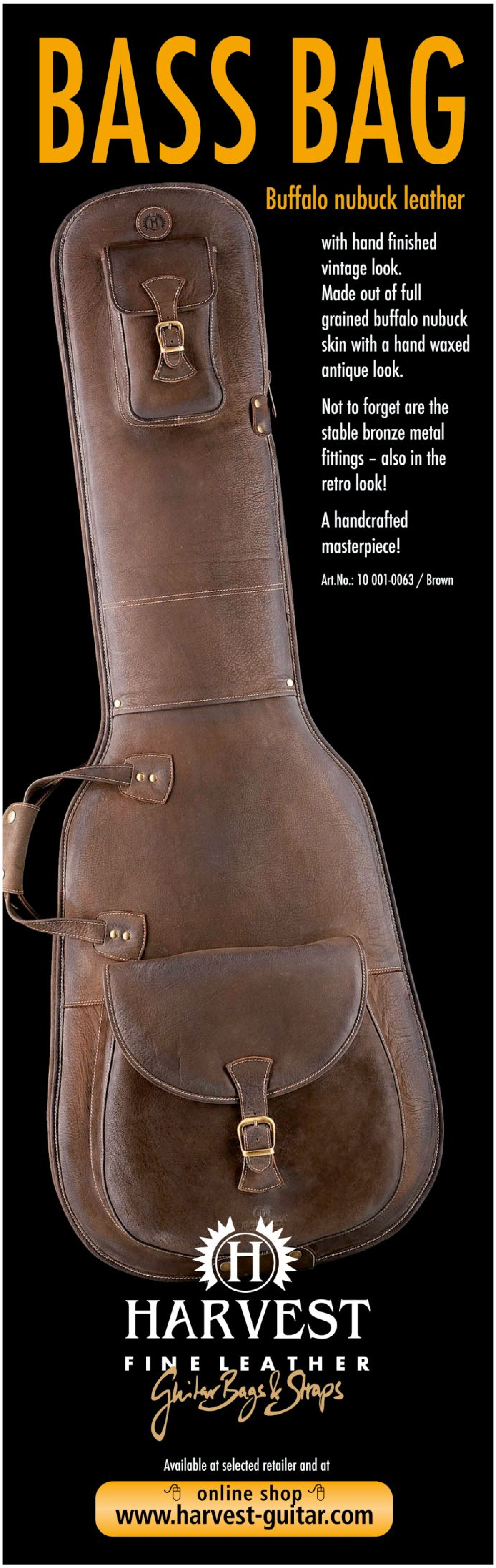

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at Berklee College of Music in Boston, which is known as a play-a-lot-of-notes school. They have a Megadeth ensemble, a group of kids who play all Megadeth tunes. They're in a small classroom, hair flying, jumping around, guitars slung low. One day Megadeth happened to be in town and came to the Megadeth class. They sat there and listened to the ensemble. I happened to be there, and I was watching the two Megadeths together. Their bassist, David Ellefson, got up and jammed with the kids, and then the singer Dave Mustaine showed one of the kids how to play one of the songs on guitar. It was the coolest thing: they gave so much to the students, and talked about it from the stage later that night.

But do you appreciate the actual music?
Of course I do. One of the things I get to do at Berklee is visit other classes. The bass department chair Steve Bailey, who is a smart guy, hired a metal bassist and they have metal bass classes. They dissect how to use a pick, and how to use tone, and how to accent the notes. I get a chance to sit in on that class, and I don't care who you are or what kind of music you play, you will be impressed when you see what these guys do. Go to a David Ellefson clinic or concert and see what he does, and then try to do it. It takes skill. These guys are as highly trained and as highly qualified as any jazz musician. They may or may not know as much theory: who cares? Their ability is at a high level.

On this tour, how much fingers-on-strings time do you get a day?
If I'm lucky, I get three hours a day, including soundcheck and a two-hour show. The rest of the day is taken up with other things, especially if you're jet-lagged. I like to go out and see the sights and meet people: I can see my bass any time! But I spend so much time on my phone, answering emails, because so much business back home gets taken care of in the middle of the night.

Do you warm up your hands before you play?
Not all the time. I do make sure that my whole body is warm, though, through calisthenics or exercise. Stretching is really important, too. I don't visit gyms; I'm not a public person in that sense. I don't want to go to the gym and have people look at me and say 'Hey, there's Victor Wooten. How much weight can he lift?' I'd rather walk the city and say hi to people. I also keep my mind ready to go. I relax, and make sure I'm not worried about what's going on elsewhere, so that I'm ready for the show and I'm able to give people more than they paid to see.

Do you have a drink or smoke a joint to relax?
No. I don't like the taste of any alcohol. I like tea and fruit juice, and occasionally I'll have a soft drink like a Coke. And I've never tried smoking weed. I'm not against it – if you want to do it, do it – but I don't do it. I learned that from my brothers, who never drank or smoked. They don't even eat meat.

Which musicians would you still like to play with?
I'm playing five dates at the Blue Note in New York with John McLaughlin, Chick Corea and Lenny White in December. That's gonna be a great band, and a dream come true. I'm really looking forward to that, but there are other people I'd love to play with – Billy Cobham and Stevie Wonder, for example.

You're known as a fast, technical player. Do people come to your shows expecting to see that kind of playing? If so, is that a pain?
They do, and I'm happy with that. If that's what people want from me, I'll happily give it to them. I believe that if people have paid to see you do a certain thing, the right thing to do is to let them have that thing. But my show isn't all about that kind of playing, although there's a certain amount of it, of course.

Some people describe you as the world's best bassist. Does that feel weird?
It used to feel very weird! But I'm more relaxed about it now. If that's what people think, then I appreciate that, even though no one knows who the best bassist is, or even if the idea of a 'best bassist' makes any sense.

What goals do you still have to achieve?
I still have goals, but I'm comfortable, so if I don't achieve them, I'll still be happy. I'm so fortunate and thankful for all the rewarding things that I've been able to do. So if – God forbid – something happens to me and I can't play a note, I'll still be happy. I've worked hard, of course, but I've been lucky: I wouldn't change a thing.

Info: www.victorwooten.com

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A ROSE BY ANY OTHER NAME

Guns N' Roses bassist Duff McKagan doesn't just rock. He *is* rock. Ben Cooper meets the maestro

Pic by Tina K

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Few bassists sum up the rock'n'roll ideal more than Duff McKagan. Propelled to fame as the low end groover in rock legends Guns N' Roses, he travelled the world, bass slung low, consuming enough alcohol and drugs to kill an elephant several times over. In fact it nearly killed him in 1994 when his pancreas burst, calling time on a period of excess which had seen him drinking 10 bottles of wine a day. That's a whole lot of chardonnay.

But Duff was always more than the dude pounding out the groove. An accomplished songwriter and multi-instrumentalist, he's also a decent singer and served as the band's default musical director. And he was blessed with more smarts than most of the LA glam metal bands put together, as evidenced by the sobriety he achieved and maintained thanks to a punishing fitness and martial arts schedule and a career as a prolific writer and musician in several post-Guns bands.

After cleaning up his act, a story painfully but skilfully told in his 2012 autobiography *It's So Easy (And Other Lies)*, and the biopic based on the book which came out this year, Duff rebuilt himself from the ground up. Along with further musical success in the form of his band Loaded and supergroup Velvet Revolver, as well as many side projects and sessions with artists such as Iggy Pop, Duff undertook a degree in finance at Seattle University and discovered a love, and no little talent for, writing.

Guns N' Roses, who are currently enjoying a resurgence in popularity since their near-complete reformation and American tour dates, are at the top of every rocker's must-see list as we go to press. We caught up with Duff before the reformation news broke to ask him about his recent EP and book (both titled *How To Be A Man*) as well as his memories of his unique life and work.

"When you have a family I think things don't settle down, they stir up," he tells us. "You have to deal with things and rise up to levels you never knew you were capable of. And you beat yourself up, because you think you failed five million times. And when you have girls, they judge men based on their dad's behaviour. I'm pulling for my girls and I want them to be strong women. It's made me much more aware of girls and what they do. They're cool, and I wasn't really aware of it before."

It's this and other insights that led him to pen a second book last year, *How To Be A Man (And Other Illusions)*. "You know, what does it mean to be a man in this day and age, when you can send a picture of your cock to anyone if you feel like it?" he explains, in relaxed fashion. "In life we always say, 'Oh I learned a lesson', but the test is, did you apply that lesson going forward?"

The inspiration for the book hit as he approached a major milestone. "I started getting wind-up texts from people a few months before I turned 50. I hadn't even thought about it until then," he tells us. "And at the same time, my football team, the Seattle Seahawks, made it to the Superbowl. I went to the game and we fucking won! Then I turned 50 and it was the best birthday ever. I didn't care. The Seahawks had just won."

Having honed his writing chops with some heavyweight newspapers and magazines, he began to bounce ideas and drafts off his former editor at *Seattle Weekly*, Chris Kornelis. Encouraged by the positive feedback, he continued his work. Writing a book, for Duff at least, is very much like recording an album.

"A good editor is like a good record producer. It was almost like a riff-by-riff, song-by-song process, where the producer is listening and giving their notes. Chris would send me suggestions. What did that look like? What did that feel like? He'd help with the ordering of things too."

With the similarity between writing a book and recording an album evident to the man himself, it's surprising that the idea to simultaneously release an EP with the book didn't come from Duff. "It was not a pre-planned thing. It was suggested to me that maybe a companion song for the book would help in promotion."

"DON'T MISS THE OPPORTUNITY TO KEEP YOUR MOUTH SHUT. IT'S IMPORTANT TO BE ABLE TO SAY 'SHIT, I WAS WRONG'"

It was something that didn't sit comfortably at first, although as Duff points out, these days with people absorbed by the internet, social media and other distractions, and with ever-dwindling attention spans and willingness to part with hard cash, you need to have put a lot of feelers out to get people's attention.

"I wasn't sure about it all, but then I hit on this riff and the opening line for the lyric to 'How To Be A Man' and, for me, that really summed up the book. So I sent that and a few other bits to Izzy [Stradlin, Duff's erstwhile Guns N' Roses bandmate] and he sent me back this perfect bridge and a guitar part, as he always does. Then we got together in the studio and recorded it."

Duff has always been able to maintain good relationships with his Guns N' Roses bandmates over the years, despite the volatility surrounding the band. He's played in Velvet Revolver with guitarist Slash and drummer Matt Sorum, and graced the stage with frontman Axl Rose long before the current reunion, so the collaboration with Izzy Stradlin was, in his words, "natural, easy and cool."

The three tracks on the EP, which also features the legendary Jerry Cantrell of Alice In Chains, are solid, driving rock with hooky choruses and muscular riffs. The bass, as always, is doing more than just support the songs with some nice flourishes and a typically gritty tone. And the writing came easily.

"I was really in book mode to be honest, and I thought it was kind of cheesy to put out an EP to promote a book, but once the riffs started coming then it felt natural. I still really feel like I'm delving into my musical life, you know. I look at bands like Aerosmith and the Stones and think, I gotta play catch-up."

Duff's children are now following in his own footsteps, he tells us. "My eldest daughter is starting to play gigs now and she finally gets it. You know the reality of it is, having been in a lot of touring bands, not just the guy from Guns N' Roses, for a lot of bands the question is 'How the fuck do we make this work?' I wish I had the answers, but I really don't."

With bands now doing paid meet and greets, licensing their songs for commercials, and relying on merchandise sales at shows, the game has changed. But there's a feeling that the fans are trying to support the bands they love, believes Duff. "Fifteen years ago they'd have called bullshit on that," he reflects. "But now they won't, because they know that bands have to find some way to monetise if they're going to keep going."

As a successful musician and someone who has taken charge of his business affairs, his advice to young musicians is both frank and back to basics. "Really it's the same as it's always been. If you believe in it, and can't live without doing it, you've got to do it, and who gives a fuck about anything else? Guys like us can discuss the finer points of it, but when you're young it's not a business, just do it."

I wonder if the process of writing the book, reflecting on lessons learned the hard way, has changed how he is as both a bandmember and bandleader. He pauses for thought. "I think the book is really asking questions. Am I applying the things I've learned? I always try to do that in bands now, I sure do. I listen more, and I'll admit when I'm wrong. When I was younger I spent a lot of time insisting that I was right. All the time. You do need some of that when you're younger to get you where you're gonna go, for sure."

At the heart of it, Duff's main piece of advice to younger musicians, and one he wished he'd applied more himself in the past, is just this: "Don't miss the opportunity to keep your mouth shut. It's important to be able to say 'Shit, I was wrong'. You know, I'm right when I'm right, and wrong when I'm wrong." ■

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MUDDY WATERS

Braving horizontal rain, lakes of mud, and enough bass decibels to fry our brains permanently, *BGM* heads to the Download Festival... and survives

Joe Morgan of InMe brings the low notes via his Warwick. Hey, not all headbangers play the bass down by their knees...

© Derek Bremmer

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Strange Bones bassist Will Bentham rocking that crucial Fidel Castro cap and Fender combo

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Might as well jump, says Don Broco bassist Tom Doyle. Let's hope his straplocks are well screwed in

© Ben Gibson

Fox Skinner (possibly not his real name, hunt saboteurs) of Swedish metallers Grand Magus hails his disciples

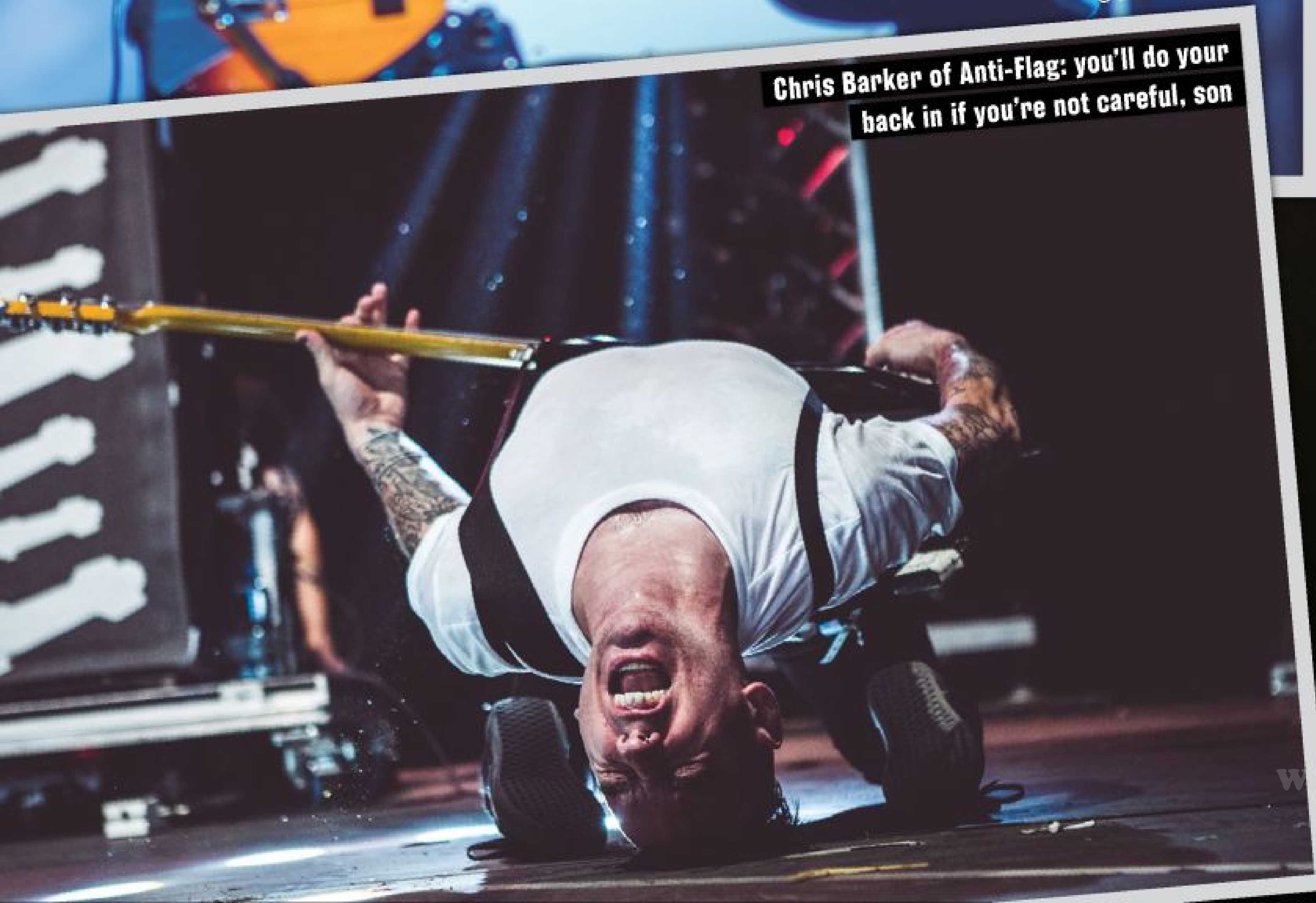
© Derek Bremmer

We love those Music Man Sub variants, and evidently so does Chris from Wage War

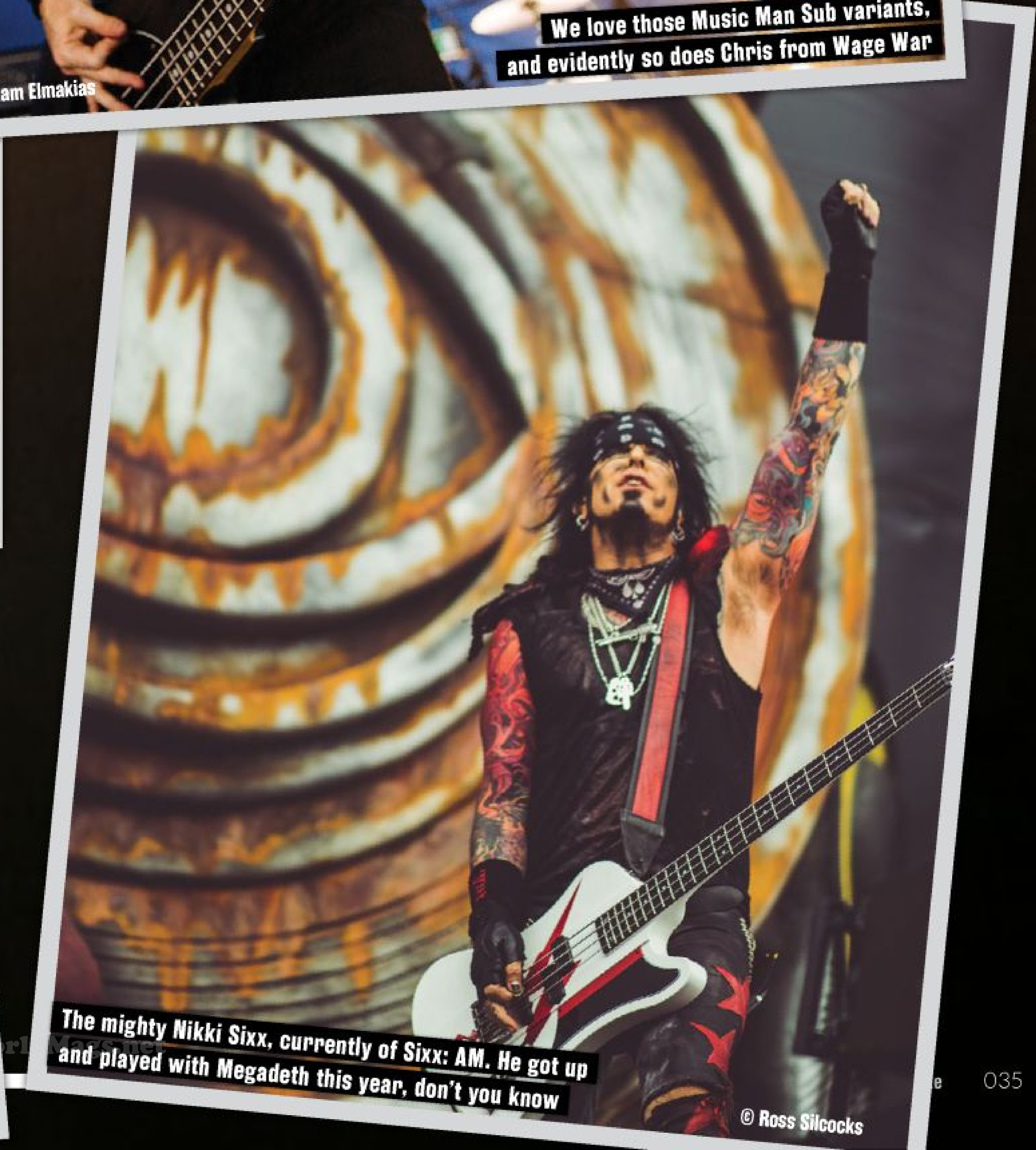
© Adam Elmakias

Milk Teeth bassist Becky Blomfield takes a minute to commune with the legions of mud

© Ross Silcocks



Chris Barker of Anti-Flag: you'll do your back in if you're not careful, son



The mighty Nikki Sixx, currently of Sixx: AM. He got up and played with Megadeth this year, don't you know

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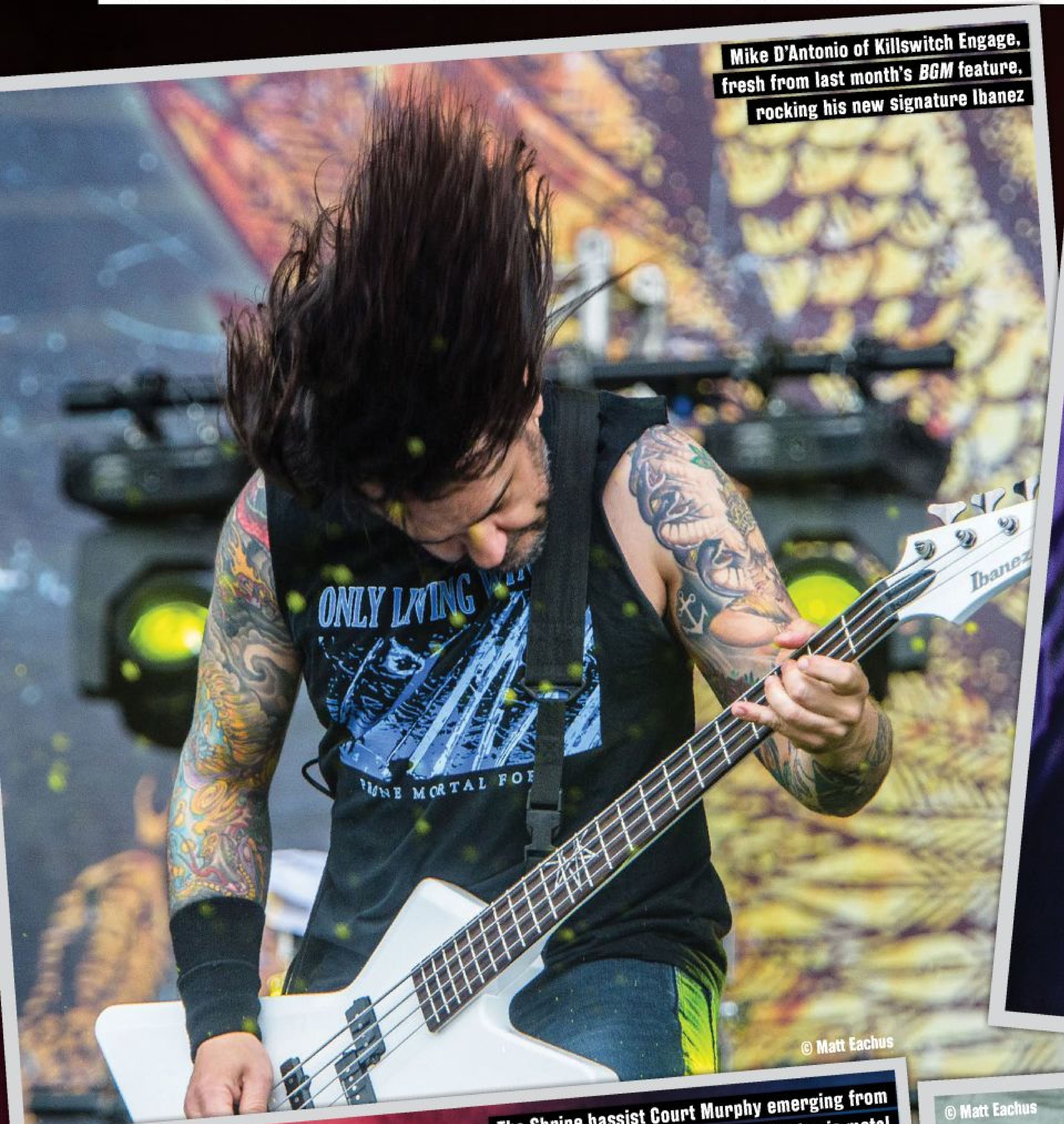

Mike D'Antonio of Killswitch Engage, fresh from last month's *BGM* feature, rocking his new signature Ibanez

© Matt Eachus

Steve Harris of up-and-coming heavy metal hopefuls Iron Maiden, still levelling crowds half his age

© Matt Eachus

The Shrine bassist Court Murphy emerging from a crowd of dry ice, because dry ice is metal

© Derek Bremner

John Moyer of Disturbed stretching off before his band's 'Sound Of Silence' show-stopper

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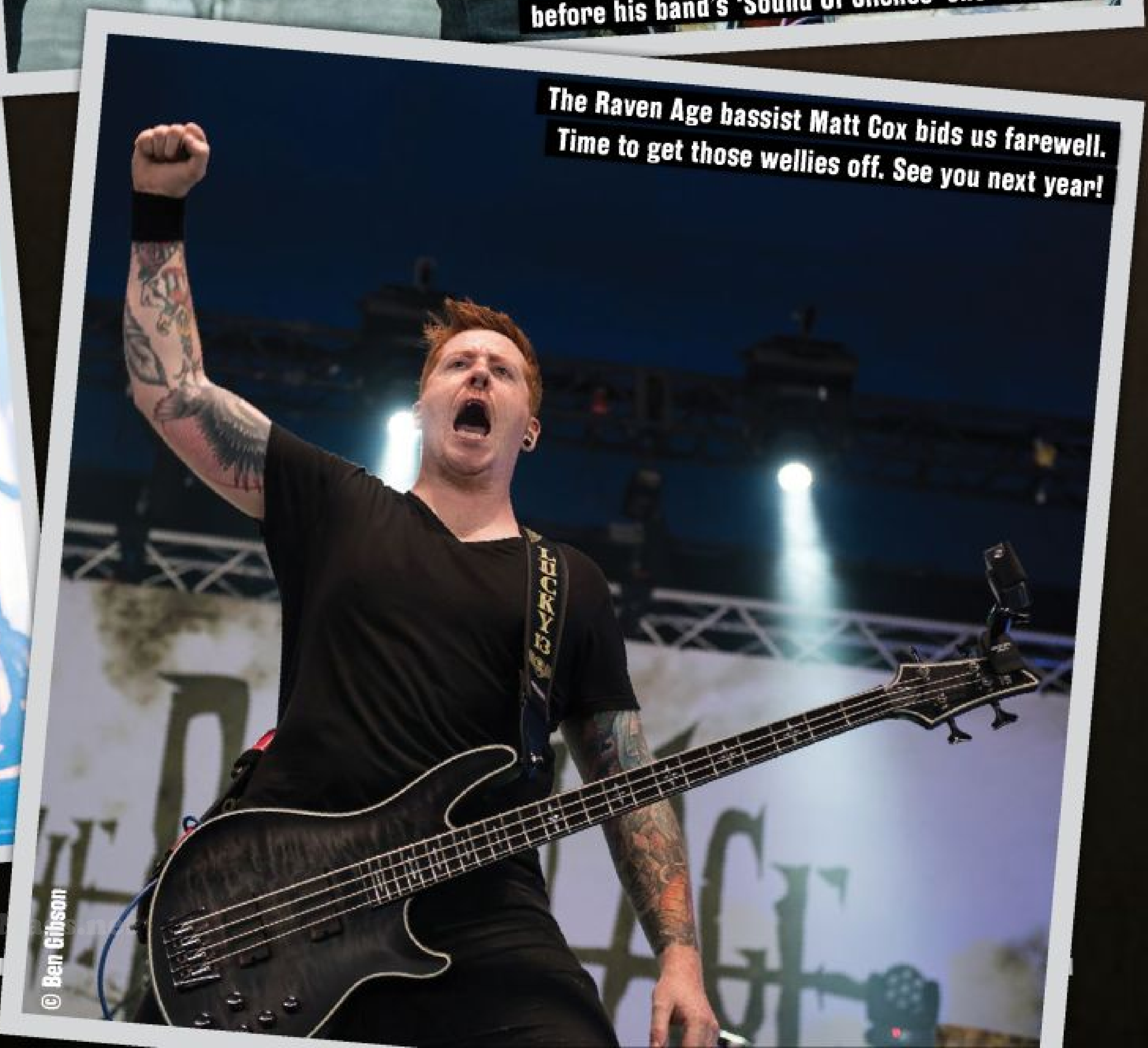

The Raven Age bassist Matt Cox bids us farewell. Time to get those wellies off. See you next year!

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Pic by Derek D Souza

CLOCKED

Sometime Jam bassist Bruce Foxton is back with a Top 40 album, *Smash The Clock*, on which his old comrade Paul Weller appears: he updates us on all things bass

Paul Jones of Manfred Mann is on our new album, as was Paul Weller and Wilko Johnson. With Weller, it wasn't arranged as such: he was around at Black Barn studio and I asked him if he wanted to play on a couple of the tracks. He said yes, and we had a cup of tea and did it. He really added something to those songs: he is where he is because he's very talented. It was great to work with him and hang out with them.

Then Wilko turned up and it was amazing to play with him. I've always been a big fan of Dr Feelgood, so to have him on our album was incredible. As for Paul Jones, he was happy to hang around and have a blast doing the tracks: no one had red light fever, it was all very relaxed.

With today's technology, writing songs is so much easier than it used to be. Russ Hastings, my guitarist and singer, records a riff onto his phone and emails it to me, where I put it on the Mac and mess around with it. I put some bass down through a Line 6 box and get the structure of the song down, just like a sketchpad.

I put down three or four tracks and we ping-pong it back and forth to each other. Eventually we got together at Black Barn studio, got the drummer Mark Brzezicki in, arranged the songs, finalised them and got them recorded. I co-produced the album with Charles Rees, the engineer at Paul's studio, who did a fantastic job – it was all very democratic.

I try to make my bass parts as melodic as possible, because they suit the songs that way. That's just my style of playing. The bulk of the bass came from a Fender Precision, which is 10 years old or thereabouts. That's my main bass, but I have another one that is very similar: a Vintage Reissue.

> “WITH TODAY'S TECHNOLOGY, WRITING SONGS IS SO MUCH EASIER THAN IT USED TO BE”

My original basses from the Jam days are all in storage: they're just too heavy! Some of them are off with the Jam exhibition, either in Somerset House in London or up in Liverpool. One of my Rickenbackers is up there: I dug a couple of them out a few years ago, and they looked fantastic, but I'd got used to the extra bottom end that the Fender gives me. Back in the Jam days, we used to try and make a Ricky sound like a Fender, and failed miserably, probably because they're totally different guitars.

I use Ashdown amps, with the odd effect on the sound here and there. Don't ask me what, because Paul's studio is like an Aladdin's cave when it comes to gear. I've been using Rotosound strings since day one, 35 or 40 years ago: they've been very supportive and it's a great relationship. I like the top end the strings give me, because I need clarity in those melodic lines.

Four strings is enough for me. I've got quite small hands, which was one reason I preferred using Rickenbackers in the old days, because the necks were narrow. I could have played a Fender Jazz, I suppose, but I don't like the word 'jazz' in a sentence…

We're always on the road. Our band, From The Jam, is booked up into next year and the quality of the songs, whether by the Jam or by ourselves, speak for themselves. Audiences love it and the ball just keeps rolling on, thankfully. I love every minute of it and as long as the crowds keep coming, I'll keep on doing it.

Info: www.fromthejamofficial.com

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14105 - Spector Legend Standard 4 Blue Stain
15370 - Squier Classic Vibe 50s P Bass, W.Blonde
15231 - Squier Vintage Mod. Jazz 77, Sunburst
4615 - Squier Vintage Modified Jazz 77, Black
14778 - Vintage ICON V74MR Fretless, Sunburst
14613 - Vintage Icon VJ74 MRBK, Distressed Black
14490 - Vintage LV4BB Lefthanded 4 String, Black
14407 - Vintage LVJ74 Lefthanded Bass Guitar, Natural
14489 - Vintage VJ74MSSB Bass, Sunset Sunburst
15268 - Warwick Adam Clayton Solid Creme White
6446 - Westcoast BG4 Neck Thru Body, Brown

YAMAHA

8437 - Westcoast JP1 4 String Bass in Trans Red
14836 - Yamaha 2024 Bass, Sunburst, Secondhand
10120 - Yamaha BB1024X 4 String, Caramel Brown
4649 - Yamaha BB2024X, VSB Vintage Sunburst
6953 - Yamaha BB424X, Vintage White
5634 - Yamaha BB714BS Billy Sheehan, Lava Red
13927 - Yamaha TRBX174EW, Translucent Black
13926 - Yamaha TRBX174EW, Translucent Natural
13137 - Yamaha TRBX304 Bass In Mist Green
14935 - Yamaha TRBX504 Bass, Trans Black
14934 - Yamaha TRBX504 Bass, Trans Brown

5 String Basses

10109 - Cort A5 5 String Bass, Open Pore Natural
13657 - Cort A5 Custom SP 5, Spalted Maple
15363 - Cort A5 Ultra Artisan 5-String Bass, Nat
14312 - Cort Action V-DLX, Cherry Red Sunburst
15378 - Cort B5 Plus Artisan Series 5-String Bass
15361 - Cort C5 Plus Artisan Series 5 String
12538 - Cort GB75 5 String Bass, Open Pore Nat.
14639 - Fender American Deluxe Dimension V,
15360 - Fender American Deluxe Jazz Bass V Black
15281 - Fender American Deluxe Jazz Bass V, Nat
13117 - Fender Deluxe Dimension Bass V Natural
9702 - G&L Tribute L2500 5-String In Walnut
15265 - G&L Tribute L2500 5 String, Blueburst
15261 - Lakland 5501 5 String Bass, Black
15410 - Marleaux Consat Custom 5 String Bass
15407 - Marleaux Contra 5, Old Violin Finish
15408 - Marleaux Diva Fretless 5-String Bass
15406 - Marleaux MBass Custom 2012 5 String Bass
13875 - Kelly Dragonfly 5 Fretless Acoustic Bass
15383 - MusicMan Stingray 5 20th Anniv. Red Used
12198 - MusicMan Stingray 5 Honeyburst
10960 - Pedulla Rapture Fretted 5-String Bass
5121 - Rockbass Streamer LX5, Black
15466 - Sadowsky Will Lee 5-String, Green, Used
0000 - Spector - 3 Models in Stock Now
15294 - Warwick RB Corvette 5,White High Polish
15295 - Warwick RB Streamer NT 4, Yellow Polish
15293 - Warwick Corvette $$ 5-String, Black
6448 - Westcoast JB5, Trans Amber
0000 - Yamaha - 5 Models in stock now

Acoustic Basses

15234 - Fender Kingman Bass SCE with Case
5393 - Levin LAB150 Bass, Electro 4, Black
5394 - Levin LAB150 Bass, Electro 4, Natural
5392 - Levin LAB150 Bass, Electro 4, Sunburst
13875 - Kelly Dragonfly 5 Fretless Acoustic Bass
15117 - Takamine GB30CE Electro Acoustic
14263 - Takamine GB72CE Jumbo
15157 - Takamine GB72CE Jumbo Cutaway
13014 - Tanglewood TWRBE Travel Bass Guitar

Electric Upright Basses

4910 - Bridge Cetus Electric Double Bass
5110 - NS Design NXT Electric Double Bass
14482 - NS Design NXT Electric Double Bass
6360 - Yamaha SLB200 Silent Double Bass

Fretless Basses

15381 - Lakland 4402 Deluxe Fretless Bass, Used
15408 - Marleaux Diva Fretless 5-String Bass
13875 - Kelly Dragonfly 5 Fretless Acoustic Bass
14778 - Vintage ICON V74MR Fretless, Sunburst

String Deals

2 Sets of Elite (4 String) £25 inc P&P
2 Sets of Elite (5 String) £30 inc P&P
2 Sets of Rotosound (4 String) £25 inc P&P
2 Sets of Rotosound (5 String) £30 inc P&P
2 Sets of D'Addario (4 String) £35 inc P&P
2 Sets of D'Addario (4 String) £40 inc P&P

Bass Combos

13577 - AER Amp III Bass Amp Combo
5627 - AER Amp One (200W, 1x10)

Ashdown Engineering

15188 - Ashdown AAA 120 15T 120w 1 x 15"
15190 - Ashdown AAA 30 8 30w 1 x 8" Combo
15187 - Ashdown AAA 300 210T 300w 2 x 10"
15189 - Ashdown AAA 60 10T 60w 1 x 10" Combo
11192 - Ashdown ABM C115H Neo Evo 3 Bass
6459 - Ashdown ABM C210T-500 EVO 3 (575W)
15192 - Ashdown B-Social Bass Amp / Bluetooth
8753 - Ashdown Five Fifteen Mini Rig 100
8750 - Ashdown Perfect Ten Bass Combo
15182 - Ashdown RM C112T 500 EVO 500w 1x12
15180 - Ashdown RMC115T 500 500w 1x15 Bass
15181 - Ashdown RMC210T500 EVO 500w 2x10"
5224 - Ashdown Tourbus 10 (10W, 1x6.5)
13905 - Blackstar ID Core BEAM Bluetooth Amp
13806 - Cort GE30 Bass Amp Combo
8988 - EA Euphonic Audio iAmp 350 Bass Head

EDEN

13705 - Eden D210XLT 8Ohms Bass Amp Combo
12430 - Eden EC10 50 Watts Bass Amp Combo
12432 - Eden EC15 180W Bass Amp Combo
12431 - Eden EC210 2 x 10 Bass Amp Combo
13375 - Eden EC28 Bass Amp Combo
13566 - Eden EGRW1264 Head & Cab Package
13704 - Eden EM275 Bass Amp Combo

Fender

13497 - Fender Rumble 100 Bass Amp Combo
4238 - Fender Rumble 15 (15W, 1x8)
12745 - Fender Rumble 200 Bass Combo
15113 - Fender Rumble 25 Bass Amp Combo
8284 - Fender Rumble 30 Bass Combo
4237 - Fender Rumble 350 (350W, 2x10)
15114 - Fender Rumble 500 Bass Amp Combo
4772 - Fender Rumble 75 Watt Bass Combo

Hartke®

10104 - Hartke A35 35W Bass Combo
9278 - Hartke A70 Solid State Bass Amp Combo
9471 - Hartke David Ellefson A70 Bass Combo
14093 - Hartke HD15 Bass Combo
14095 - Hartke HD150 Bass Combo
13773 - Hartke HD50 Bass Combo
13783 - Hartke HD75 75W Bass Combo
9008 - Hartke HMH112C Bass Combo
9281 - Hartke Hydrive HMH210C Bass Combo
9279 - Hartke Kickback 15 Bass Amp Combo

Mark bass

9004 - Markbass 121 Lite Alain Caron Combo
6239 - Mark Bass CMD102P Bass Combo
5472 - Mark Bass CMD151P J Berlin (300W))
13279 - MarkBass Markacoustic AC601 Combo
6240 - Mark Bass Mini CMD121P (300W,1x12)
5474 - Mark Bass Mini CMD151P (300W,1x15)
5475 - Mark Bass CMD121H (300W, 1x12)
9940 - Markbass Mini CMD 151 Jeff Berlin
9939 - Markbass MiniMark 802 Bass Combo
9938 - MicroMark 801 Bass Combo

ORANGE

5234 - Orange Crush PiX 25BX (25W, 1x8)
5233 - Orange Crush PiX 50BXT (50W, 1x12)
15111 - Orange OB1 300 Combo

Roland

6320 - Roland CB100 (100W, 1x12)
4433 - Roland CB120XL Cube 120X (120w,1x12)
4435 - Roland Cube 20XL BASS (20W, 1x8)
4434 - Roland Cube 60XL (60W, 1x10)
5678 - Roland Microcube Bass RX, (5W, 4x4)
15433 - Vox Pathfinder 10 Bass

Bass Heads

15176 - Ashdown ABM1200-EVO IV 1200w Head
14618 - Aguilar Tone Hammer 500 Bass Amp Head
13641 - Aguilar Tone Hammer 500 Bass Head
15115 - ABM 600 EVO IV 600W Ashdown Bass Head
15177 - Ashdown ABM600RC EVO IV 600W Rack
13192 - Ashdown Five 15 BBH 220w Big Boy Head
10938 - Ashdown MIBASS 2.0 640w Small Bass Head
14171 - Ashdown RM220 Rootmaster Bass Amp Head
15179 - Ashdown RM500 EVO 500w Rootmaster Head
14531 - Ashdown RM800 Rootmaster Bass Amp Head
14553 - Ashdown Retroglide 800 Compact Bass Head
13200 - Eden E300 Bass Amplifier
13566 - Eden EGRW1264 Head & Cab Package
13414 - Eden WT800 Bass Amp Head
13198 - Eden WTX500 Bass Amp Head
15484 - Fender Bass Man 800
9349 - Hartke HA2500 Bass Head
9027 - Hartke Kilo 1000 Bass Head
12382 - Hartke LH1000 Bass Head

Mark bass

14828 - Mark Bass Nano Mark 300 Bass Amp Head
10408 - MarkBass Bass MultiAmp Stereo
6243 - Mark Bass Little Mark III Bass Head 500w
9035 - Markbass Little Mark III Tube Bass Head
5244 - MarkBass Little Mark Tube 800, 800W
7962 - Markbass TTE500 Randy Jackson Bass Head
9256 - Markbass Big Bang 500W Bass Head
9941 - Markbass Little Mark 250 Head Black
15271 - Markbass Little Mark Ninja Bona Head
9944 - Markbass MultiAmp
15151 - Markbass Randy Jackson TTE501 Bass Head
9725 - Markbass TTE801 Randy Jackson Bass Head
15109 - Orange 4 Stroke 300 Bass Amp
15110 - Orange 4 Stroke 500 Bass Amp
6261 - Orange AD200 MK3
8231 - Orange Dark Terror Valve Guitar Head

Bass Cabinets

13640 - Aguilar SL112 Bass Cabinet

Ashdown Engineering

15191 - Ashdown AAA 115T 200w 1 x 15" Cabinet
5677 - Ashdown ABM810 (8x10)
6457 - Ashdown ABM115 Compact (1x15)
15178 - Ashdown ABM210H EVO IV 300w 2 x 10"
15460 - Ashdown ABM210H NEO
6456 - Ashdown ABM410H (4x10)
15185 - Ashdown RM210T EVO 300w 2 x 10"
15183 - Ashdown RM 112T EVO 300w 1 x 12"
15184 - Ashdown RM 115T EVO 300w 1 x 15"
14172 - Ashdown RM210T Bass Cab
15186 - Ashdown RM 610T EVO 900w 6 x 10"
14196 - Blackstar HT Metal 412A Extension Cab
13376 - Eden D410XST Bass Cab
13566 - Eden EGRW1264 Head & Cab Package
13197 - Eden EX112 Compact Bass Cab
13195 - Eden EX210 Bass Cab
13199 - Eden EX410 Bass Cabinet
13201 - Eden EX410SC Bass Cabinet
14254 - Hartke 210XL 2 x 10" Bass Cab
9007 - Hartke HCH112 Bass Cab
9292 - Hartke HCH410 Hydrive 410 Bass Cab

Mark bass

6241 - Mark Bass STD102HF (2x10)
6242 - Mark Bass STD104HF (4x10)
5477 - Mark Bass STD151HR (1x15)
9033 - Markbass Traveler 121H Bass Ext Cab
9034 - Markbass Traveler 151 P Bass Guitar Cab
4733 - Mark Bass Traveller TRV102P (2x10)
5431 - Mark Bass NY121 New York 1x 12 Bass Cab
10412 - Markbass NY122 2 x 12 Bass Cab
10409 - Markbass NY151 1 x 15 Bass Cab
10410 - Markbass NY151 RJ 1 x 15" Randy Jackson
15272 - Markbass New York 122 Ninja Bona Cab
6259 - Orange OBC115 (1x15)
14484 - Orange OBC210 Mini Compact Bass Cab
6260 - Orange OBC410H (4x10)
5241 - Orange OBC810 (8x10)

For full guitar details, pricing and photos, enter the number next to each guitar model into our SKU search facility on the website.

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LUCKY JIM

Session and stage star Jimmy Sims talks the bass life with Mike Brooks

Jimmy Sims has built an enviable career, playing the sideman role for pop sensations the Saturdays and George Ezra, touring the world with Amy Macdonald and Shane Filan of Westlife and holding down the bottom end for Bryan Ferry, no less. But he didn't fall into such positions of prominence by accident – he made careful decisions about where he was heading and where he wanted to end up, as *BGM* found out when we caught up with him at the end of the Bryan Ferry tour.

Raised in the Midlands, Jimmy started playing bass for a familiar-sounding reason. "I started playing piano when I was six, but in Birmingham, there was a great lending library for musical instruments. You could try things out, so I tried all sorts of things: saxophones, trombones, trumpets. I picked up a bass at 15 and it was that classic thing: 'I want to be in a band, but no one wants to play bass'."

He adds: "I was into Nirvana and Smashing Pumpkins, and the coolest musicians in the bands I was listening to were the bass players. I ended up doing a BTEC in music and recording, and that was as far as my education went. In 2001, I was about to enrol at Bass Tech in Acton when Barry Moorhouse offered me a full-time job at the Bass Centre. I missed the first week of term at Bass Tech, missed all the induction stuff and had no friends! On my first day in the store, you had the likes of Norman Watt-Roy and Paul Turner walking in and I was thinking 'Wow, this is amazing'. The arrogance of youth was saying to me, 'I don't want to sit there learning scales, I want to be hanging out with these guys'. At the Bass Centre, there was a genuine passion for the instrument: we'd stick around after the shop closed, get some beers in and play 'Guess The Bass'. I felt that was more of an education to me than college would have been."

Having begun to rub shoulders with the bass illuminati, one contact led to another, as Jimmy explains. "I was doing odds and sods for anyone that walked into the shop. I'd started meeting people who were making a living out of music, but I was under the illusion you had to get signed to make money from music. I had a couple of covers bands on the go, so I decided to try and be full time at the age of 25, single, no mortgage.

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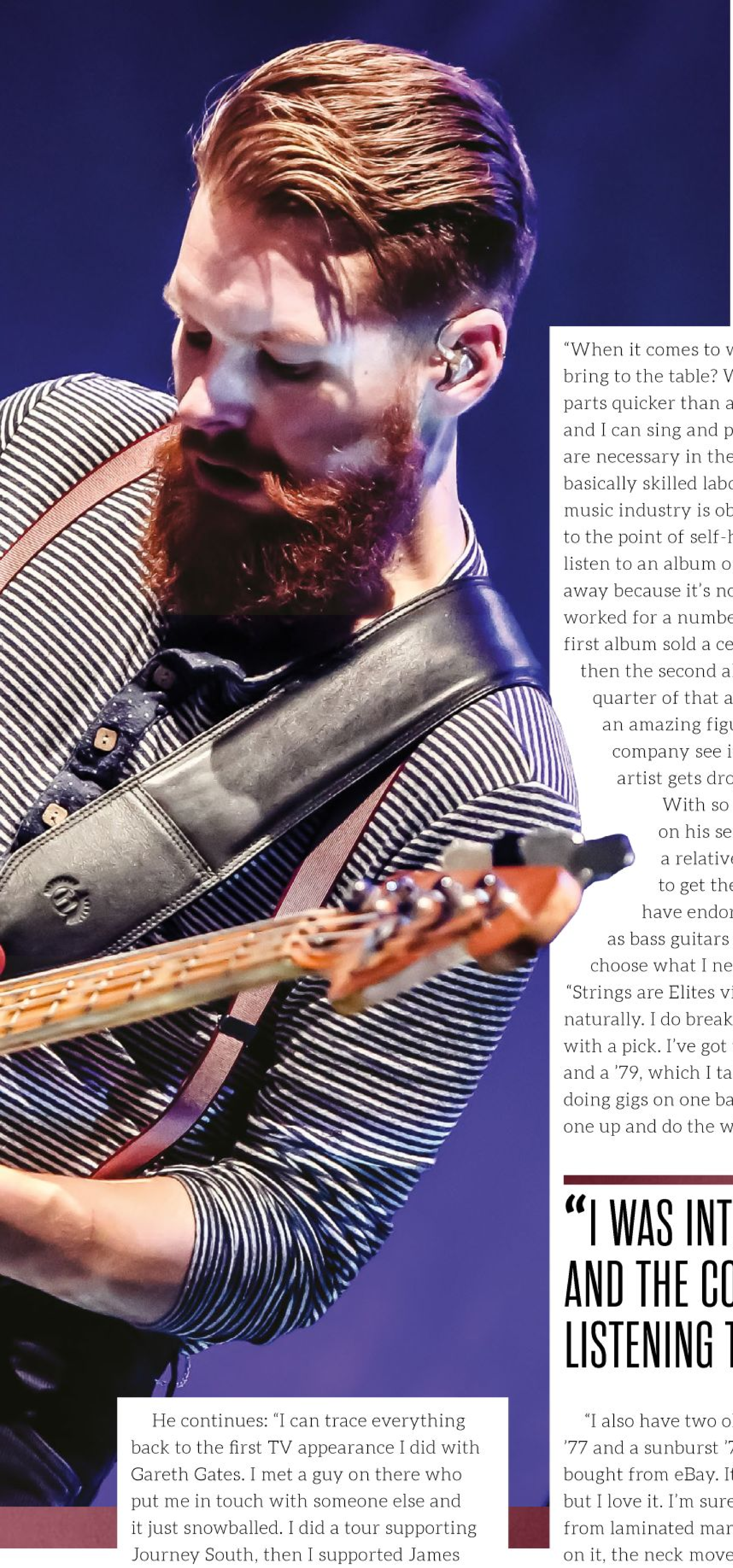

"When it comes to working, what can I bring to the table? Well, I can play bass parts quicker than a programmer can, and I can sing and perform, both of which are necessary in the live arena. We are basically skilled labourers! The British music industry is obsessed with newness to the point of self-harm: people will listen to an album once and then throw it away because it's not cool any more. I've worked for a number of artists where the first album sold a certain amount, and then the second album sold maybe a quarter of that amount – which is still an amazing figure, but the record company see it as a failure so the artist gets dropped."

With so many artists calling on his services, Jimmy utilises a relatively small bass arsenal to get the jobs done. "I don't have endorsement deals as far as bass guitars go, I like to be able to choose what I need to use," he tells us. "Strings are Elites via the Bass Centre, naturally. I do break strings as I play a lot with a pick. I've got two old P-Basses, a '72 and a '79, which I take out together. I like doing gigs on one bass: I just want to pick one up and do the whole show with it."

Letterman Show over in the US and the house bassist Will Lee came up to me and said 'That bass sounds amazing' – and I pointed to my rig."

This year has been particularly busy for Jimmy, with shows with George Ezra followed by the not-inconsiderable task of playing bass for Bryan Ferry, a hot seat occupied by many an impressive player. No pressure, then? "It's the hardest I've ever worked in my entire life!" he tells us. "The shortlist of songs was 50 songs and we touched on all of them in rehearsals. The final working list was 26 songs, but stuff is being added and taken out constantly. The soundchecks are long and Bryan knows what he wants. He has an archive with absolutely everything he's ever done, including live shows so he can send you specific parts."

This is useful as a musician, he adds. "There's one song which had a lot of bass parts going on so I asked if I could have the parts separated. So the parts come through, by Guy Pratt, Paul Turner, Marcus Miller... and then there's this aggressive sixteenths thing going on, and it's Flea! I had to comp it down to what was essential. He wants to hear what is going to work and if he thinks something isn't working, the trick is not to take it to heart. It's an amazing feeling to have done it, because it's so much fun to play."

"I WAS INTO NIRVANA AND SMASHING PUMPKINS, AND THE COOLEST MUSICIANS IN THE BANDS I WAS LISTENING TO WERE THE BASS PLAYERS"

He continues: "I can trace everything back to the first TV appearance I did with Gareth Gates. I met a guy on there who put me in touch with someone else and it just snowballed. I did a tour supporting Journey South, then I supported James Morrison, Gomez and Paolo Nutini. Some dep dates with Matt Willis from Busted followed, and all of that led to the Saturdays and Amy Macdonald in 2009: I then got the Mika tour around the end of that year."

Asked what it takes to become a successful session bass player, Jimmy replies: "Most of the work I get is because I do more than one thing. I don't think there are many bass players anymore who just play bass guitar. I'm probably one of the last guys that do what I do that didn't come through the college system.

"I also have two old Jazz basses, a black '77 and a sunburst '72 or '73 which I bought from eBay. It's been a nightmare but I love it. I'm sure the neck is made from laminated marzipan! If you breathe on it, the neck moves, but it sounds so good. I was in a hotel in Hanover with free wifi and free cocktails – and I bought a bass from eBay so I got what I deserved! I also use Aguilar, which came about when I got the Mika tour at very short notice. Mika called on the Friday, we went into rehearsals on the Saturday, and headed off on tour in America on the Wednesday. They had already hired the gear, so I turned up and the Aguilar gear was something else, it was so 'right'. They loved the sound of it and what I was hearing made total sense to me. I just plug into it and my sound is there. I played the

The ever-recognisable Lee Sklar accompanied Jimmy on the tour, performing in the support band belonging to singer-songwriter Judith Owen. Surely he must have learned something from the bass legend in the process? "I learned that the best way to get through anything is to relax. Being an honest, nice guy gets you everywhere. He's one of my heroes anyway, so I can't tell you how genuinely nice it was to tour with the bloke. He's just this relaxed, ageless guy, almost Buddhist, floating around the place. There's a short bass solo in Bryan's set, so I'm playing, start to walk to the front for the solo, I look to the side and there's Lee smiling at me. I look the other way and Judith Owen's husband, Harry Shearer – Derek Smalls in *Spinal Tap*! – is giving me the double thumbs up. I can't believe that something like that would come together. My heart has never beat so fast!"

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AFFLICTED

Ahren Stringer, frontman of the Amity Affliction, talks the metallic low frequencies

Pic: James Lehman

We keep it simple. The bass sits under the guitar nicely on our new album, *This Could Be Heartbreak*, and gives it that nice little kick. Our engineer does all the tricky stuff of making the frequencies sit together and I put a lot of faith in him to dial it all in. I'm more of a guitarist, actually: I switched from guitar to bass when we had a line-up change. Our new guitarist was an absolute shredder so it made sense for me to move to bass and concentrate on singing. I just picked it up and had a go from scratch.

When I write songs I play guitar: in fact I think kids who want to learn bass should learn guitar first. That way, you can switch to bass and you've already got a head start. If you can play guitar, you can play bass, but the other way round is much harder! One thing to watch out for in that case, of course, is that you can start playing the bass like a guitar, doing a sideways strum on the strings, which doesn't sound good. It wasn't until I recorded an album that I realised it didn't sound right.

I try my best to play in unison with the guitars, which really takes discipline. If we had a super-amazing bass player like Les Claypool of Primus, then I'm sure we'd end up butting heads. This way, we all agreed that we want the bass to stick to a defined place rather than get in the way of the guitars, because there's so much stuff going on guitar-wise.

> **"I'M MORE OF A GUITARIST, ACTUALLY: I SWITCHED FROM GUITAR TO BASS WHEN WE HAD A LINE-UP CHANGE"**

I play Ernie Ball Music Man basses: they have such a beautiful shape, I love those guitars. They're all four-strings: I only use the E and A strings anyway. We tune to drop A#, drop B and drop C. I take two basses out on tour and use heavy-gauge strings to stay in tune.

On tour I use a Kemper straight into the desk: there's three of them, because the guitar players use them too. I like to have a tone like an SVT Classic plus a Sansamp, with a little bit of grit – I like a bass to sound like a bass. There's no need to take cabs, or even heads: the Kempers are so much easier to tour with. We spend most of the year in different countries and it was costing so much money to hire all the different cabs, so we went with the Kempers. So many other bands are doing it, because they sound so killer. ■

***This Could Be Heartbreak* is out now on Roadrunner.**
Info: www.theamityaffliction.net

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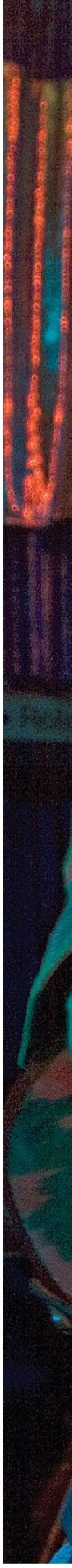
FLOWIN' THE LOW



From living in the projects to a 10-year stint in the Stooges, Mike Watt has seen more than most in a five-decade career at the bottom end. Joe Shooman meets the great man

Mike Watt is best known for his work with influential California punks Minutemen, led by the late D. Boon, whose sound and approach spawned hundreds of musically inventive, but stripped-back-to-the-bone 'econo-sound' imitators.

Collaborators over the years include Dave Grohl, Eddie Vedder, J. Mascis, David Pettibon of Pere Ubu, members of Mars Volta and even *American Idol*'s Kelly Clarkson. However, it was an unlikely source that got him started as a four-stringer back in the early 1970s at age 13 or thereabouts.

"I was told to play bass by D. Boon's mother," the affable chap explains. "She didn't want us to get into trouble so she asked us to make a band to keep us in the house after school. We could see credits on lots of records that there was a bass player. She played guitar herself so I guess she wanted D. Boon to play that, and there was another brother named Joe Boon who could do drums, so I could be the other guy."

There was just one small problem, he adds. "I didn't even know what a bass was. In the pictures of bands you could see there was four tuning pegs on a bass so I got a $15 Teisco electric guitar and just used four of the strings. I didn't buy my first real bass until I was 16. It was a Fender P-Bass. I couldn't believe how thick the strings were! I was like, 'What the fuck is this?' to the guy in the shop."

The basslessness of D. Boon's rudimentary record player, plus the insufficient power on the amp the nascent pre-Minutemen used, didn't help. "Our amp had this clean bell sound which really couldn't handle the bass at all. We thought tuning was personal – some people like loose strings, some people like tight strings. I am grateful we don't have any tapes of those days, because we must have sounded godawful."

Going to see bands hardly helped in those dark days before punk. "Our experience of gigs before punk was arena rock, which was like the Nuremberg rallies with PA just about loud enough for the singing in these sports grounds," recalls the bassman. "You were so far away it was lame. So when punk came we started going to clubs. I could get up close enough to see the bass player: people like Hollywood punks the Germs got women on bass, and not just playing tambourines. The only woman I saw in a band playing bass before that was Suzi Quatro, playing with Alice Cooper.

"Hollywood punk was still pretty tiny: iconoclastic. It blew our minds that we could be part of music and all of a sudden the playing field was level. Everyone was starting to learn to play and the bass was as important as the drummer. In a lot of the bands, the bass was driving and the guitars were just texture. Punk was more a state of mind than a style of music to me. Everyone was going for it where [previously] you weren't supposed to, and this was great stuff for me."

It was a liberation from classifications based on genre, image, expectations – all shared by the Minutemen's main men. "D. Boon didn't just want the political side in the lyrics, talking about fair share, egalitarian politics and shit, but he wanted that in the band too. We also learned together. You'd listen to other guys' records and play along: there's some worth in that because you get other people's perspectives, the way they skin their cat. You find very early that there's many ways to do it. Punk is not a style, it's a situation: what are you gonna do with it?"

Bass, Watt continues, is still finding itself. "The future of the bass is composition," he declares. "Harmonically, when you do a demo on a guitar, it has a lot of content. With the bass, we're kind of lacking in that but we've

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"IT BLEW OUR MINDS THAT WE COULD BE PART OF MUSIC AND ALL OF A SUDDEN THE PLAYING FIELD WAS LEVEL"

got the rhythm. Our instrument looks like a guitar but if you ask me it's more like a drum: where the sounds live, where the punching is.

"This is where I learned a lot in 125 months of the Stooges. Iggy Pop's a big picture man. Nothing against the fusion guys – they can really play, and full respect to them – but you can get lost in the big picture. It's like a drummer who has the kick muted – the snare and the toms will get stuck navel-gazing."

Touchpoints include the Stooges, Beefheart, the Pop Group ('Like Funkadelic mixed with Captain Beefheart') and the inimitable James Jamerson, of whom footage exists, playing the iconic line to 'What's Going On'.

"[He's] lying on the floor, totally drunk and doing it in one take. He's reading the chords but he is swinging with the drums, totally responsible to the tune but throwing his name in there. This is the happening thing: you don't surrender the humanity. He does it without an ego push, but you know it's a James Jamerson bass-line."

"Music is a band trying to make an interesting conversation between the instruments. Music is a liberating thing, so all these hierarchies are just Berlin Walls in the mind," he asserts. "The other thing is the physics. It's only a couple of hundred hertz compared to the thousands of a guitar, so we have to pick our punches. We have big wave links with our notes, we're down there: the more notes you play, the more nodes you get and more cancellations – so you get smaller. On bass you get punished for trying to play too many notes, so search for the right notes. The guy just learning to play bass can do a bitching bass-line, because he has a small number of notes."

Watt's own style has ranged from pick to his 'flipper-like' index-first finger technique ("The more meat on the string, the fatter sound and less ting") although he has used slap techniques in the past, particularly with Firehose.

As time meanders on, so do the physical challenges of continuing to rock the house. Watt's solution? Simplify it. "I use P-Basses in the studio, but live I like to play with smaller basses like the Gibson EB-0, because my hands are less young, with smaller reaches. They don't sound so different live but they're flabbier on a recording. I like my Moon bass for recording but it's not wild enough for gigs," he explains. "If I go into someone else's pad to record, I use what they got. They know how to use it. I went up to Eagle Rock, brought my '56 Thunder Precision with Thunderbird pickups: you know, 'Where's the cord? I brought my bass,' and off you go. Festivals, too, I'll just ask, 'Is there a Fender P-bass?' They're so consistent – unless someone's really fucked it up or set it up badly– that I'll just play that. I'm not precious about that stuff. I do need a bit of compression because I'm a bit of a thug, but not as bad as I used to be where I'd break three or four strings every gig."

So what advice does the Mike Watt of 2016 have for anyone wanting to start playing bass? "I never stay with a technique if it's giving me pain; it has to be right for where I am at this time of life. So many people get the hurts. I don't want to have to stop cause the hands go bad. Listen to Motown 45s. Start playing with Jamerson, that's the greatest starting point for a bass player. Listen to Geezer Butler. Check out Mr Entwistle and 'The Real Me', the first song on *Quadrophenia*, what a fuckin' bass-line. Then from there find your own way. And keep the flow, man, flow the low."

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Pic by Eckie

GETTING GOOD

Silvia Bluejay meets the phenomenally fast-fingered Dingwall-wielder Adam 'Nolly' Getgood of metallers Periphery

I met Adam 'Nolly' Getgood at the London Bass Guitar Show, to which he had been invited by luthier Sheldon Dingwall as one of his star players. Adam plays bass in djent band Periphery, as well as producing their albums. He is also a guitarist, and has brought that perspective to his other roles in the band.

"Periphery is actually the first band I've played bass in," he explains. "Having done quite a lot of recording, I knew the kind of bass tone that works for this style of music: it's not a traditional tone by any means. It's got a lot of distortion, and because of how low the guitars are tuned, I found that the bass needed to be tuned an octave lower. So when I came into the market looking for a bass to use, Dingwall was top of my list."

Indeed, Nolly has just created his own signature Dingwall model. "I was already familiar with the fanned-frets technology on guitars," he says. "I find that, as the scale length gets longer, you get a thinner, more piano-like sound, with less mids, excellent for getting clarity on the lower strings. With the extra scale length, you don't need to use a thick gauge string to achieve the necessary tension to tune low. That's important, both because it's difficult to get hold of strings that are really thick for low tuning, and because there is a limit – a thick string just doesn't flex in the same way as a thinner one. You really tend to lose the high end, and while the other strings of the bass sound great, the lowest string sounds like a wet kind of thump."

I've noticed that on some 34" scale low B strings. "Exactly," he agrees. "And we're talking F# here. With the fanned fret technology the 37" scale is so much easier, as the whole bass isn't 37", only the lowest string. The sonic character – that piano-like sound – reacts really well with the kind of distortion I wanted to use, and it gave me both the recorded sound and the live sound response that I was looking for. I found Dingwall and I was perfectly satisfied. My signature model bass is just a variation of the Combustion model they already offer: it's the most affordable of their basses but, to me, doesn't really lack anything. It's very roadworthy, it's a simple instrument, just a bolt-on neck on to a body, no fancy woods."

The customisation focused on the sound, he tells us. "The two pickups can be used in series as well as in parallel. The series pickup position is pretty much the only sound I use: it's just so powerful and punchy. We also added a preamp made by Darkglass Electronics, whose distortion pedals I've been using. We voiced that more or less for the bass and we found the mids we liked. I was happy with the low end that Darkglass suggested, but we refined the top end control. Instead of a high-up treble control, we moved to a broadband presence lift control. It can cut, and when it cuts it's almost like a passive tone control, it rolls off the top. When it boosts it's like extra aggression, more of a global adjustment than a typical treble control. That works really well for me."

The band uses the same set-up for their live performance as in the studio. "We are always striving for our live show to sound as close to a studio sound as we can," he says. "We go to great lengths to achieve clarity and separation in the studio recordings, and that's the way we want our music to sound. With the help of our sound guy, we try and make sure that the people at the shows experience something close to what they hear on the record. The bass does exactly the same thing in the live context except, of course, you have the extra volume to make it all the more impressive."

And there is a new Periphery album that will have just come out as you pick up this magazine. Nolly reveals more: "Even more so than on the previous two albums, the bass is a major component. The album is called *Periphery III: Select Difficulty* and it'll be our third traditional, non-concept album."

***Periphery III: Select Difficulty* is out now.**
Info: www.periphery.net

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GEAR REVIEWS

48 MAYONES Patriot Custom

52 IBANEZ SRFF806-BKS 6

Behold our world-beating bass gear review section, where we bring you the crop of each month's new, interesting or otherwise relevant bass guitars, bass amplifiers, bass cabinets and bass effects. Occasionally we'll review a guitar effect if it's particularly useful for bassists, and we'll test recording equipment and general accessories every now and then as well, but generally speaking, this zone is for bass-specific gear.

We take the ratings that we give each item very seriously. *BGM* is the only print magazine devoted to bass in this country, and we have readers from all over the world, so we're responsible about our conclusions. If a product is worth your investigation, we'll say so; if it's flawed in some way, we won't hold back from making that clear. We're not beholden to advertisers in any way and our conclusions are entirely independent of the views of manufacturers, musicians and distributors.

When you read about a bass-related product here, you know you're getting a sensible, balanced review from an experienced bass tester. Value for money is at the top of our agenda in these cash-strapped times, but on the other hand, we believe in paying for quality.

Right, that's enough from me. Remember, this is just about the only place that it's good to have GAS!*

Joel McIver, editor

*GAS = Gear Acquisition Syndrome (a malaise often suffered by bass players)

56 ORANGE Crush Bass 25, 50 and 100 Combo

60 GR BASS 700+ Head

64 DARKGLASS Vintage Ultra

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MAYONES
Patriot Custom

Mike Brooks helps himself to a custom dollop of Mayones. Does it have the necessary sauce?

Bass Direct
www.bassdirect.co.uk

Mayones are steadily becoming more visible in bass-selling emporiums around the country, and with good reason: they're producing some seriously top-notch instruments. With basses that cater to more traditional tastes, through to more luxurious blinged-up models, the Polish luthiers offer something for most bass-playing preferences. This Patriot Custom model has an enticing features list and looks to die for – but does it tick all of the necessary boxes?

Build Quality

Straight away, you're impressed by how comfortable this bass is to wear. The instrument as a whole feels very organic, with the wenge

and padouk neck timbers contributing significantly to that. The dark colour scheme over a flame maple top and light coloured ash body core works well with the rich, dark neck timbers, while the rounded body curves, extensive cutaways and mild contouring all add up to a fine-looking bass that fits well against the player. The elongated top horn makes the instrument look longer than it actually feels to wear and play.

The level of finishing on the neck and the bass throughout is excellent. With no front position markers and only mother of pearl side dots for navigation, the 'clean' look of this bass is quite obvious, but it works with the dark colouring, vibrant through-neck laminates and the curvaceous matching headstock.

The pair of EMG 35 pickups are obviously well matched to the EMG BQC active EQ, with controls for Volume, Balance, stacked Mid and frequency sweep and Treble/Bass. Black hardware has been used throughout and looks pretty tasteful. The flip-top battery compartments and cavity plate are all neatly laid out on the rear.

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TECHNICAL SPECIFICATION

Price | £1950
Made in | Poland
Body | Swamp ash body with flame maple top
Neck | Five-piece wenge and padouk, 34 ¼" scale
Neck joint | Through-neck
Nut width | 43mm
Fingerboard | Rosewood
Frets | 24
Pickups | EMG 35 pickups x2
Electronics | EMG BQC System Active EQ
Controls | Volume, Balance, Middle/Mid-Frequency Sweep, Treble/Bass
Hardware | Black Schaller tuners, black Mayones bridge
Weight | 4.3kg
Case/gig bag included? | Hard case included
Left-hand option available? | Yes

WHAT WE THINK

Plus | A great-looking bass with some pleasing woody tones, highly playable
Minus | Lacks the X factor to set it apart
Overall | Definitely worth considering if you have £2,000 to spend: a broad tonal palette with great electronics and exemplary craftsmanship

BGM RATING

BUILD QUALITY
SOUND QUALITY
VALUE

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"AT A SNIP UNDER £2,000, THE PATRIOT IS AN IMPRESSIVE INSTRUMENT, BUT IT SITS IN A PRICE POINT ALONGSIDE OTHER, MORE ESTABLISHED NAMES"

Sounds and Playability

With a 34 ¼" scale length, the Patriot not only benefits from a clear, punchy acoustic tone with great sustain, but in terms of playability, this is the sort of instrument that drags you back for more. Blessed with a good set-up and snappy response, the natural tone of this instrument is impressive.

So plugged in, what are we faced with? Well, the bass resonates well, that's for sure, and the flat response slap sound is good. The fingerstyle tone is rounded but vibrant. There is an inherent throatiness that seems to colour the signal, which is not surprising considering the timbers used, but it's subtle and not too intrusive and the bottom end is very solid.

Adding some EQ gives the sonic display a lively boost: thankfully, the EMG circuit does an admirable job without being extreme or excessive across the frequency spectrum. I was impressed with the broadness of the mid frequencies, which really give extra clarity and power in a band mix. Alternatively, use them for some extra honk in conjunction with the bridge pickup. Sure, it will get you out of trouble if the battery fails – but it's a shame that the passive signal is so indistinct. Spend some time getting to know the tones, because the circuit affords this bass a broad tonal palette. As with many bass guitars, the mid-EQ is sometimes your best friend – so working with the mid-frequency sweep to find the most suitable tone is recommended.

Conclusions

At a snip under £2,000, the Patriot is an impressive instrument, but it sits in a price point alongside other, more established names. The fact that it comes with a hard case is a bonus, but probably not enough to set it apart. The craftsmanship, comfort and playability are all impressive. Visually, this is a real head-turner and sonically, it's very good – but does it have the necessary killer punch to make it a first choice for players spending that sort of money?

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WILLCOX GUITARS

SABER VL BASS

Electronics	LightWave Analog Optical Pickup System
Scale	34″
Body	Chambered Swamp Ash
Top	AAA Flame Maple
Neck	Three Piece Rock Maple
Fingerboard	Custom Composite
Bridge	Custom GraphTech Monolith
Power	Rechargeable NiMH Battery

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IBANEZ SRFF806-BKS 6

Bass Gallery
www.thebassgallery.com

The Soundgear range from Ibanez goes from strength to strength — and now comes with fanned frets. Mike Brooks takes a look at this new six-string

We've reviewed many Ibanez basses here at *BGM*, so when we got wind of a fanned fret model in production, needless to say we were interested. With Dingwall basses ploughing the fanned fret furrow with some success, it was only a matter of time before other manufacturers became aware of the playing benefits. Being a six-string monster, this bass should particularly benefit from the playing comfort that fanned fretting affords. Let's take a look!

Build Quality

I don't think I've ever played an Ibanez bass that wasn't comfortable to wear, with a high degree of playability, and this bass continues that trend. It balances very well for a six-string and the familiar SR styling works despite very little rear contouring. The slim body depth and rounded horns make up for this while the slim neck profile works fine with the broad rosewood fingerboard and 16.5mm string spacing for comfortable left-hand fretting. The open grain body timber and fingerboard colouring

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TECHNICAL SPECIFICATION

Price | £749
Made in | Indonesia
Body | Black stained ash
Neck | Five-piece jatoba and bubinga laminates, 35.5" to 33.6" scale
Neck joint | Bolt-on (four bolt attachment)
Nut width | 54mm
Fingerboard | Rosewood
Frets | 24
Pickups | 2x Bartolini BH1 pickups
Electronics | Ibanez Custom Electronics active three-band EQ
Controls | Volume, pickup pan, EQ bypass switch, mid-frequency selector switch (250 Hz, 450 Hz, 700 Hz), bass/middle/treble (passive tone control on/off) boost/cut
Hardware | Cosmo Black Ibanez tuners, Mono-rail V bridge
Weight | 4.2kg
Case/gig bag included? | No
Left-hand option available? | Yes

WHAT WE THINK

Plus | Well constructed with good balance, a wide array of tones and great playability
Minus | None
Overall | Definitely worth investigating if you're looking for a six-string bass, and it won't break the bank

BGM RATING

BUILD QUALITY
SOUND QUALITY
VALUE

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give the bass an organic, woody vibe that straddles the more modern elements of this design rather well. Mother of pearl block markers adorn the 24-fret fingerboard with white dot markers on the side.

The set-up and overall level of finishing is excellent, apart from a slight rough patch on the satin finished jatoba and bubinga multi-laminate neck at the headstock join: otherwise the frets are well dressed, with no sharp fret ends in evidence, giving the neck a sleek feel – helpful when navigating a broad six-string neck. The neck joint is also tight and stable with no visible gaps around the neck pocket.

The Ibanez tuners, finished in Cosmo Black, operate smoothly, as do the five controls (volume, pickup pan, bass, middle and treble, the treble control also acting as a passive tone control). The two switches offer mid-EQ switching (250 Hz, 450 Hz and 700 Hz respectively) and EQ bypassing. A pair of Bartolini BH1 pickups have been matched with the Ibanez three-band EQ circuit: the pickups have been positioned in a slanted fashion to coincide with the fanned fret system and the changes in scale length with respect to each string. The Mono-rail V bridge uses individual units for each string and like the tuners, are finished in Cosmo Black.

Sounds and Playability

As with most SR basses, this instrument has a bright, natural acoustic tone that resonates strongly, each string sounding full and responsive across the whole neck. The timbers give this bass a solid delivery with a strong and vibrant fundamental tone: plugging in, this bass immediately shows what it's all about. The dual-coil pickups provide a strong note-for-note delivery – even with the EQ set flat, and with the tonal possibilities that a six-string bass affords, this is pleasing to hear.

Panning across both pickups, the usual characteristics are evident: full-bodied, rounded tones from the neck pickup, increased brightness and twang from the bridge pickup. Taking the low B and high C strings into consideration, I'm pleased to report that this bass performs exceptionally well for a sub-£800 Indonesian-made instrument. Ibanez should be commended: this puts some £2,000+ instruments to shame.

The EQ and switching options give the player all the tone-shaping facilities they require, but with the extended high and low ranges, and

"IBANEZ HAS MADE GOOD USE OF THE FANNED FRETTING ON THIS BASS, AND NO DOUBT ON THE FIVE-STRING MODEL TOO"

the added frequency response that the extra neck and body timber naturally provide, investigating the EQ and experimenting with different settings for different playing styles is advisable. Too much bass boost can swamp your tone, while too much treble can make your sound brittle and ineffective, particularly when using the C string. Yet again, getting to know the mid-EQ settings, the available frequencies and how they work in relation to fingerstyle, pick playing, slapping and tapping, is a worthwhile exercise if you want to get the most out of this bass.

Fanned frets make most sense when used on a six-string, I feel, to offer the player improved comfort. Six-string basses are notoriously a handful: no matter how light or comfortable they are, there's no getting away from the dimensions and bulkiness of a six-string neck. The fanned frets offer some relief to the fretting hand and in use, this bass with its sleek SR neck provided one of the most comfortable six-string bass playing experiences I've encountered.

Conclusion

Ibanez has made good use of the fanned fretting on this bass, and no doubt on the five-string model too. At this price, you are getting a very good six-string instrument with all the Ibanez hallmarks, a plethora of tonal options, comfort, playability and an impressive sonic display. If a six-string is on your shopping list, or if you fancy a dabble in the murky world of extended range basses, look no further.

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"THERE'S A CRUSH AMP HERE TO SUIT EVERYONE, WHETHER FOR PRACTICE, REHEARSING OR RECORDING — EVEN SMALL TO MEDIUM GIGS"

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TECHNICAL SPECIFICATION

Price | £179, £269, £469
Made in | China
Power | 25/50/100
Speaker | 8"/12"/15"
Features | 25BX: Bass, Mid, Treble EQ, Headphone Out, Aux In, Master Vol, 8" driver. 50BX: Bass, Mid, Treble EQ, Gain, Master Vol, Headphone Out, Aux In, 12" driver, Line Out, Ext. Speaker Out, built-in tuner. 100BX: Bass, Lo Mid, Hi Mid, Treble EQ, Contour, Presence, Gain, Master Vol, Headphone Out, Aux In, 15" driver, switchable pre/post EQ XLR DI out, built-in tuner, FX loop
Weight | 9/15/26.5 kg

WHAT WE THINK

Plus | All three are well made, good sounding and very reasonably priced
Minus | Nothing significant
Overall | No ground-breaking technologies or materials here, just great sounding, well designed and good looking bass combos at affordable prices

BGM RATING

BUILD QUALITY	■■■■■■■■□□
SOUND QUALITY	■■■■■■■■□□
VALUE	■■■■■■■■□□

ORANGE
Crush Bass 25, 50 and 100 Combos

Kev Sanders tries the ap-peeling Crush range of amps from Orange. Is the future bright?

Orange
www.orangeamps.com

Orange has been releasing lots of innovative new kit for us low-enders recently, but the Crush range of combos follow their time-tested formula of pokey amps and drivers in good-looking, sturdy cabinets. There are three combos in the range and although they fit into the Orange catalogue below the mighty OB1-300 combo, they should fulfil the need of most bass players looking for a quality amp at a good price and with that distinctively Orangey flavour.

The smallest in the range is the CR25BX. Orange describes this as 'perfect for practice' and after spending some time with it at home, I have to agree. While the controls are fairly basic, with a simple High, Middle and Low EQ, the mini-jack Aux In and headphone socket make this the ideal companion for those long hours of wood-shedding. The 8" speaker, the size of the cabinet and smaller amp power obviously mean you'll soon reach its limitations, both in terms of volume and low end reproduction, but with a bit of EQ tweaking you'll be surprised at just how good this little amp sounds when it's used as intended. It's well put together too, and like the rest of the range uses quality components and hardware throughout.

Next out of the box is the middle amp in this range, the 50BX. Here things get a bit more serious. You still get the Aux In and headphone socket, but there's also a useful extension speaker output and a built-in tuner. Although this is primarily an amp for practice and low-volume rehearsals, the big difference here is the larger cabinet and 12" speaker, which immediately gives you an extended low end and higher volume. The 50BX has a really distinctive sound: old school but clean, rich and punchy. That's probably because the relatively compact cabinet dimensions still accentuate the low mids, although this can be easily dialled out or emphasised as you wish using the simple three-band EQ. Adding in a little overdrive from the gain stage gives you a real flavour of the popular Orange sound, distinctive and very rock and roll.

I found that increasing the Low and High controls, while slightly backing off the Mid by a notch or two, gave me just the sound I was after. The DI on the front panel means that you can send it to the mixing desk and out through the PA, making it a lot more versatile than many small bass combos and a serious contender for the growing number of bass players using minimal back line and in-ear monitoring on gigs. It's pretty impressive.

Having tried out the 50, I was looking forward to checking out the 100-watter. Not surprisingly it has a lot in common with the 50 in terms of tone, although the big 15" driver delivers a good deal more low end and the amp has a fatter, warmer sound generally. The EQ is a lot more sophisticated than that of the smaller amps, with the 100BX having not only a four-band EQ (Hi and Lo mids as well as the Bass and Treble controls) but also individual controls for Contour and Presence.

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Used in combination, there's a huge tonal range available here, but it needs a little more care than the 50BX when setting a sound, particularly with the amount of low end, which can soon become overpowering if you're a bit heavy-handed. Further adding to the 100BX's gigging credentials are the switchable pre/post EQ XLR DI out and effects loop. Another welcome feature for life on the road are the side-mounted handles, which make moving the amp from vehicle to venue easy, as does the reasonable 26-kilo weight.

Having the bigger amp is a real bonus, not just in terms of volume (it's undeniably much louder than the 50) but also in terms of headroom. Even at high volume, the low B string on my five-string Fender Jazz sounds clean and unstressed – something you can only really achieve with bigger cabinets and more power. The 100BX is definitely a serious proposition for small or medium gigs, where the amount of air shifted by the cabinet and driver should make it viable for a wide range of applications.

There's a Crush amp here to suit everyone, whether for practice, rehearsing or recording – even small to medium gigs. All of them fulfil their remit admirably, but for me, the 50 is the star of the range. The 50-watt amp and 12" driver really seem to suit the cabinet dimensions and the sound is full and clear with adequate low end and plenty of headroom. Add to that its lightness and portability and the option of adding an extension speaker, and for just over £250 it's a real bargain.

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GRBASS
700+ Head

Dave Clarke takes the 100 per cent Italian GRBass 700+ micro head for a spin. Is it more Ferrari F40 or Fiat Panda?

GR Bass
www.grbass.com

The GRBass 700+ is the smallest 700-watt micro head on the market, according to Italian bass amp and cabinet manufacturer Gianfranco Rizzi. Is this a case of 'another day, another micro amp'? Not quite. Of course, there's plenty of choice on the market these days for those of us looking to downsize or create a more convenient set-up for when circumstances dictate. However, not all micro heads are powerful enough to compete with the acoustic volume of the more lead-fisted John Bonham wannabes.

In such instances, using a tiny amp equipped with ample headroom might be the difference between being sonically anonymous or sitting pretty in the mix onstage or at rehearsal. With this in mind, the GR Bass 700+ fits the bill for both convenience and power. And for those who like to worship at the temple of individuality, a little extra will afford you the luxury of customising the amp's external casing, choosing its colour and adding your logo.

With 700 watts RMS at 4 Ohms and 350 at 8, the 700+ feels rock solid in your hand, weighing 2.1 kilos and sat on 6mm-tall rubber feet. The front panel features an input jack, a -10 dB switch, gain and master volume controls and a three-band EQ. There's also a mute switch, which displays a red LED when in use, leaving the tuner-out signal intact, as you'd expect.

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"AS AN ASIDE, I'M FAIRLY CERTAIN THAT THE SLAPPERS OUT THERE WILL HAVE ENDURED, ON AT LEAST ONE OCCASION, THE FRUSTRATION OF KNOWING THAT THEIR PNEUMATIC THUMB HAS BEEN RENDERED INAUDIBLE TO EVERYONE IN THE ROOM EXCEPT THEM"

In addition, there's also a middle frequencies filter switch as well as a subsonic filter switch, which can be used to help protect your cab's speakers by eliminating frequencies under 22 Hz. It also features 3.5mm jack sockets for aux-in and headphones-out. The front panel's features are completed by a handy DI/headphone volume pot and a horizontal blue 20-LED VU meter that fans of *Knight Rider* will no doubt love (look it up, kids).

The rear panel features two Speakon sockets, an XLR DI socket, a 6.35mm jack tuner output, send and return jack sockets, a pre/post EQ push-switch, a 9V DC output, an on/off switch for the amp's built-in fan and a switch to choose between a dot or bar display for the aforementioned VU meter.

A couple of minor gripes with the build quality; when you look down at the jack sockets on the rear panel, the washers and nuts obscure the print, indicating which socket is which. In a practical situation, this means having to either lift the amp to get a proper look, or craning your neck over the back of your cab. My other slight issue is that the front panel's push switches look a bit cheap, and therefore look out of place on

TECHNICAL SPECIFICATION

Price | £670 approx
Made in | Italy
Power | 700 watts RMS 4 Ohm / 350 watts 8 Ohm
Features | Gain and master volume controls, three-band EQ, subsonic filter, mid-frequency filter (400-800 Hz), headphone/DI volume control, two-coloured on and clip, LED VU meter, LED mute switch, -10 dB switch, input 230-115v (selectable), 9v DC output, tuner out, send, return, pre/post DI, DI output, view selector for VU meter, 2 x Speakon outputs, fan switch
Weight | 2.1kg
Dimensions | 24cm x 20cm x 5cm

WHAT WE THINK

Plus | It sounds great and has plenty of power and useful features
Minus | No built-in tuner and aesthetically questionable push switches on the front panel
Overall | The GRBass 700+ is a welcome addition to the micro head market

BGM RATING

BUILD QUALITY
SOUND QUALITY
VALUE

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“I HOPE THE MASSES WILL BE PREPARED TO DEVIATE FROM THE MARKETPLACE NORMS AND AT LEAST TRY THIS AMP BEFORE MAKING A FINAL DECISION ON WHICH ONE TO PURCHASE”

what is an otherwise slick bit of kit. There's no built-in tuner, either. I personally believe that in 2016 all amp heads should have a built-in tuner as standard, and more so with micro heads, when part of their appeal is portability and convenience.

The standard colours included in the price are black or white. Customising the head to any other colour will cost you €20. Likewise, adding a logo costs €30 and customising the front panel with a logo or a different colour is a further €20.

Rizzi's motto is 'Respect your bass'. By this, he means that the 700+ does not modify the sound of your bass guitar. The philosophy is that you create your sound with your fingers and your bass: with this in mind, I plugged in my Music Man Stingray Classic, activated the -10 dB switch, set the EQ controls to the 12 o'clock position and left the subsonic filter switched off. Using the VU meter I added a decent amount of gain before setting the master volume to the 11 o'clock position. I'm happy to report that the 700+ immediately sounded immense. I'd have been ready to play a gig with that basic flat setting there and then.

Don't get me wrong, I've achieved some entirely pleasing results using other micro heads, but this was unquestionably the most impressive flat setting, plug in and play moment I've enjoyed to date. The 700+ instantly delivered a satisfyingly full bottom end, complemented by an equally impressive punchy mid-range and all the attack you'd expect from the top end of a Stingray sporting a new set of roundwounds. I honestly didn't want to change a thing. It just sounded great, reminding me of the saying 'simplicity is the key to success'.

When I began exploring the amp's tonal capabilities beyond a flat setting, the 700+'s EQ was pleasingly responsive and offers enough cut and boost to satisfy the majority of players. The bass EQ gets a special mention: unlike the other micro heads I've tested, the GRBass 700+ has a huge-sounding bottom end that, crucially, is beautifully defined. This makes for a genuinely reassuring tool to have at your disposal. Dare I say it, it also generates the kind of warmth I'd normally only associate with a tube preamp.

As an aside, I'm fairly certain that the slappers out there will have endured, on at least one occasion, the frustration of knowing that their pneumatic thumb has been rendered inaudible to everyone in the room except them. Well, the 700+ seemed to add muscle to my slapped A, D and G strings. I know there's a lot you can do with your set-up to combat such issues, but these impressive results served to put a smile on my face (if not my neighbours').

The micro amp market is becoming an increasingly crowded one, but the GRBass 700+ has a lot to offer. With a sonic delivery that won't disappoint, its price point sits neatly among its better known competitors. The 700 watts under an optional customised casing provides all the power you'll need, with plenty of cosy headroom to fall back on.

I hope the masses will be prepared to deviate from the marketplace norms and at least try this amp before making a final decision on which one to purchase. The bottom line is that the GRBass 700+ sounds great, and I don't know a bassist who doesn't look for that in an amp.

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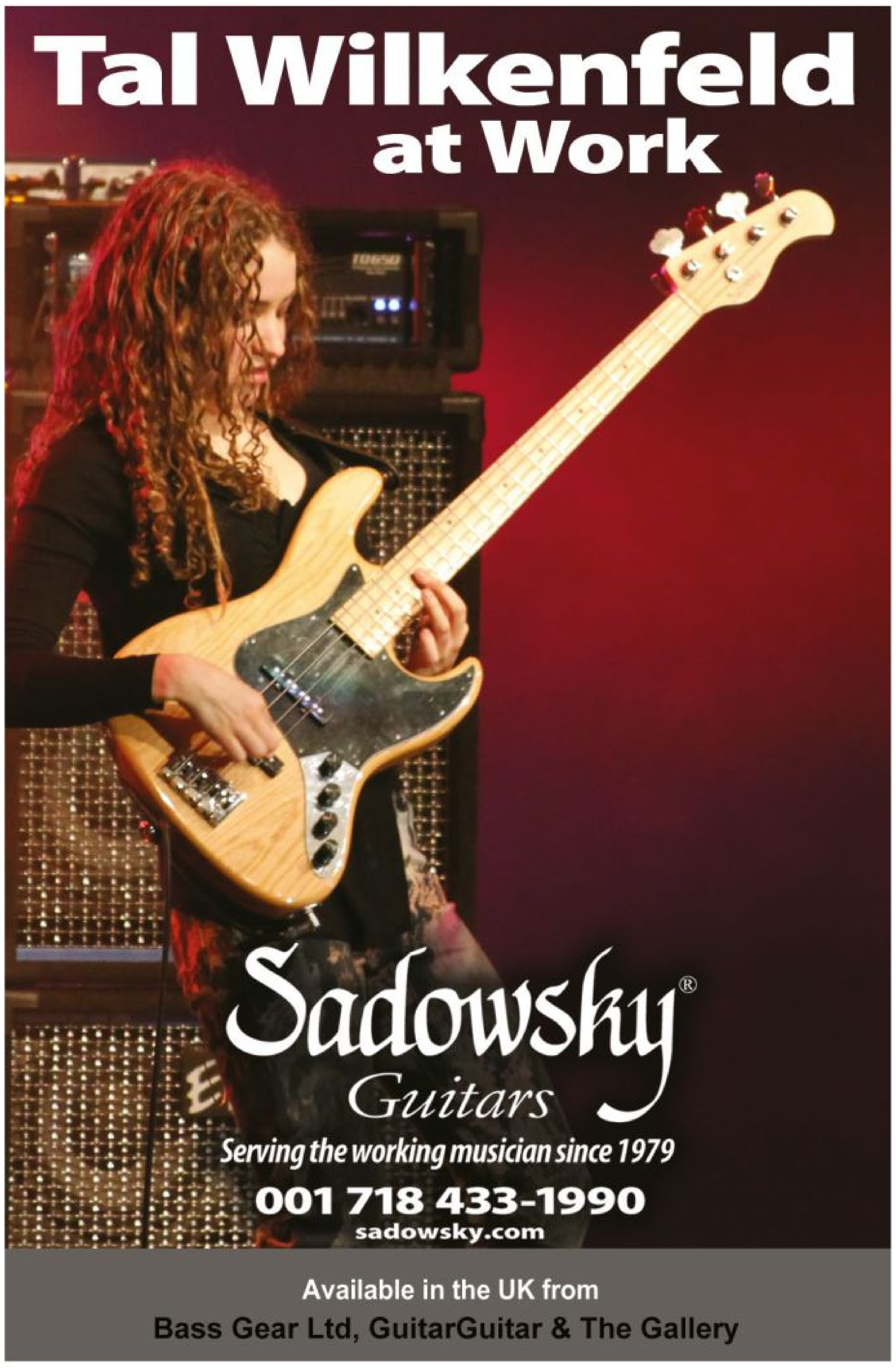

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DARKGLASS
Vintage Ultra

Darkglass give us an Ultra version of their Vintage distortion. Joel McIver gets in the tube

Darkglass
www.darkglass.com

Back in *BGM* 127 we reviewed the Darkglass Microtubes Ultra, a superb distortion pedal given the 'Ultra' upgrade for those who fancied some extra tone-shaping options and a bypass switch. Here's the similar and equally wonderful Vintage overdrive, which differs from the Microtubes in its slightly warmer tone but is otherwise just as desirable: your choice of which of these Finnish-made units to go for will be down to which variant of tone suits you best.

Two whinges in which we at *BGM* often indulge when it comes to pedals are invariably related to a) price and b) over-generous tone options. The former is an obvious concern in this case: like all Darkglass products, the Vintage is beautifully designed and assembled: like a glistening chrome brick, you could stand on it all day and we doubt any harm would come to it. Then again, it costs £300, three times the price of a dozen other perfectly decent drive pedals that anyone reading this could name in about five seconds. You're paying for quality, of course, but you're paying a lot.

As for the tone-shaping facilities, there's no need to worry here: the interface is both simple and rewarding. As with the Microtubes, a Master volume controls the overall output and Level pot controls the output of the distorted signal alone, managed by a Blend control for the wet and dry

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"THERE'S A RANGE OF FUZZ TONES, FROM BRITTLE, BARELY CRUNCHY SOUNDS IF YOU ROLL OFF THE BLEND MOST OF THE WAY AND APPLY JUDICIOUS AMOUNTS OF BASS, VIA WARM TUBE GRIT, TO THE EXPECTED THUNDEROUS BREAKUP"

mix. The four-way EQ is wholly logical and the four three-way toggle switches – which you can see in the pictures – do obvious jobs. Even without bothering with the overdrive, what you have here is a very usable preamp.

Stamp on the drive switch, though, and the fun begins. There's a range of fuzz tones, from brittle, barely crunchy sounds if you roll off the Blend most of the way and apply judicious amounts of bass, via warm tube grit, to the expected thunderous breakup. If you're after eardrum-shredding beehive shrieks, you'd be better off with the Microtubes: the Vintage doesn't quite go to those trebly extremes – although it's interesting to note that it will deliver an excellent, glassy slap tone in bypass mode. Stoner-rockers and doom-metallers will find the tones they're looking for here, and I can imagine blues bassists dialling up a mild crunch with this pedal too. Experiment with the microswitches and let us know how you get on – but check the rest of the market first. You don't need us to remind you that just because a product is expensive, that doesn't mean it's the best for you and your tone.

TECHNICAL SPECIFICATION

Price | £300
Made In | Finland
Features | Master volume, Blend, Level, Drive controls; three-position toggle switches to boost/cut/shape Attack, Grunt, Lo Mids and Hi Mids; four-band EQ (Bass, Lo Mids, Hi Mids, Treble); Distortion and Bypass stomp switches; ground lift; direct out
Power 9V DC (adapter not included)
Dimensions | 107 x 96 x 42 mm
Weight | 434g

WHAT WE THINK

Plus | Wonderful drive unit with amazing tones
Minus | None, it's flawless
Overall | Expensive, high-quality unit. Do you need to spend this much?

BGM RATING

BUILD QUALITY
SOUND QUALITY
VALUE

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BASS TUITION

Making you a better bass player

Welcome to our redesigned tuition section, in which *Bass Guitar Magazine* collates the wit and wisdom of the *crème de la crème* of the electric and upright bass world. We're fortunate enough to have some serious talent on the team, from world-class music educators to experienced touring musicians, who between them have laid down the low notes in every studio, club and arena in the civilised world. Note that we've divided the columns according to Beginner, Intermediate and Advanced level for easy reference. Whether you're looking to improve your playing technique, expand your awareness of theory, set up your rig to sound like your particular bass hero or simply get on a bus and tour, we provide the answers you need here. What are you waiting for? Dive in...
Joel McIver, editor

Ellen O'Reilly is a freelance bassist and vocalist currently studying at ICMP. Ellen has extensive experience in gigging, studio and television work.
www.lowendlady.com

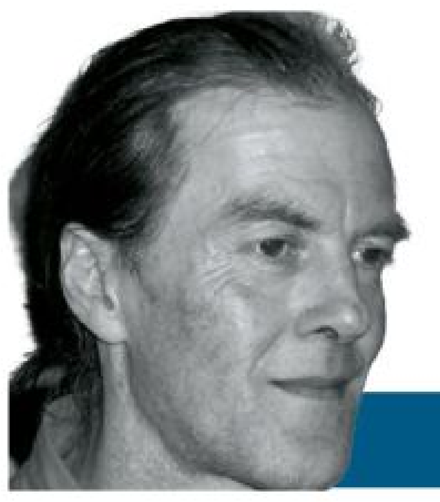
ELLEN O'REILLY BEGINNER'S THEORY 72

Paul Geary attended the Berklee College of Music in Boston and the Musicians' Institute of Technology. He also heads up the Academy Of Contemporary Music's bass school.
www.paulgeary.com

PAUL GEARY BEGINNER'S TECHNIQUES 74

Stuart Clayton is a professional bassist and writer with over 20 years of experience in the industry. He runs the bass department at BIMM Bristol and Bassline Publishing, which has published a range of tuition and tab books.
www.stuartclayton.com www.basslinepublishing.com

STUART CLAYTON INTERMEDIATE THEORY 76



Rob Statham has amassed over 25 years as a professional freelance bass player. He has played in a wide range of musical settings, including jazz, blues, prog and classical, and he has taught for the past three years at BIMM London.

ROB STATHAM INTERMEDIATE TECHNIQUES 78

Head of the Bass Department at BIMM Brighton, Franc has worked with artists such as Steve Howe (Yes), Lisa Moorish, and Mike Lindup (Level 42). Franc uses Jeff Chapman basses and Elites strings.
www.francoshea.com

FRANC O'SHEA ADVANCED THEORY 80

Say hello to advanced techniques columnist Philip Mann, star of studio and stage. Ready to get those fingers flying? Mann up...

PHILIP MANN ADVANCED TECHNIQUES 84

David Etheridge studied double bass at the Royal College of Music. Since then he's worked with musicians such as Nigel Kennedy and Martin Taylor. David teaches double and electric bass and is the MD of two big bands and a 55-piece jazz orchestra.

DAVID ETHERIDGE UPRIGHT BASS 86

Steve Lawson is the UK's most celebrated solo bass guitarist, with 15 years of touring and 36 solo and collaborative albums to his name. He also lectures at colleges around the world.
www.stevelawson.net

STEVE LAWSON EFFECTS MAESTRO 88

Mike has written for *BGM* since 2004 and has been a bassist since 1987, clocking up over 3000 gigs around the world in the process. He has played for and worked with the likes of Bonnie Tyler and Toyah Willcox, and has a bass collection to rival a small shop.

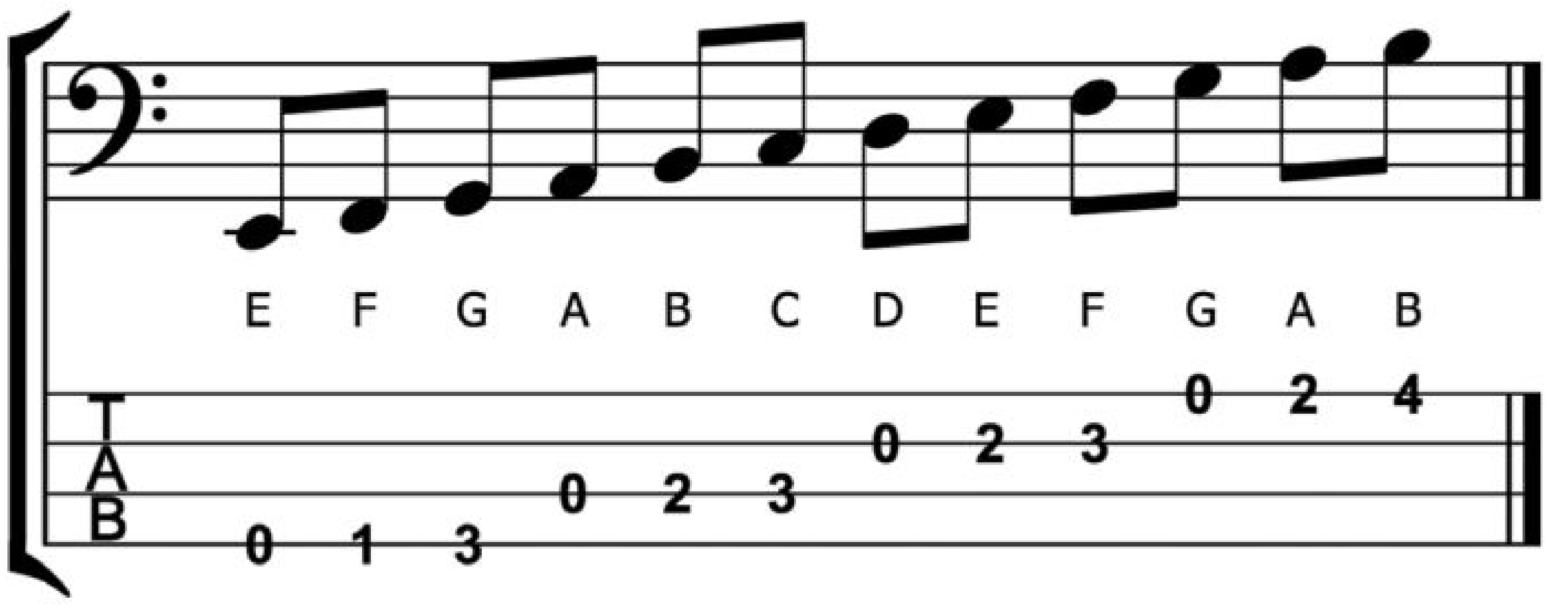
MIKE BROOKS CLASSIC BASS ALBUMS 90

BGM Notation Legend

The following is a guide to the notation symbols and terminology used in *Bass Guitar Magazine*

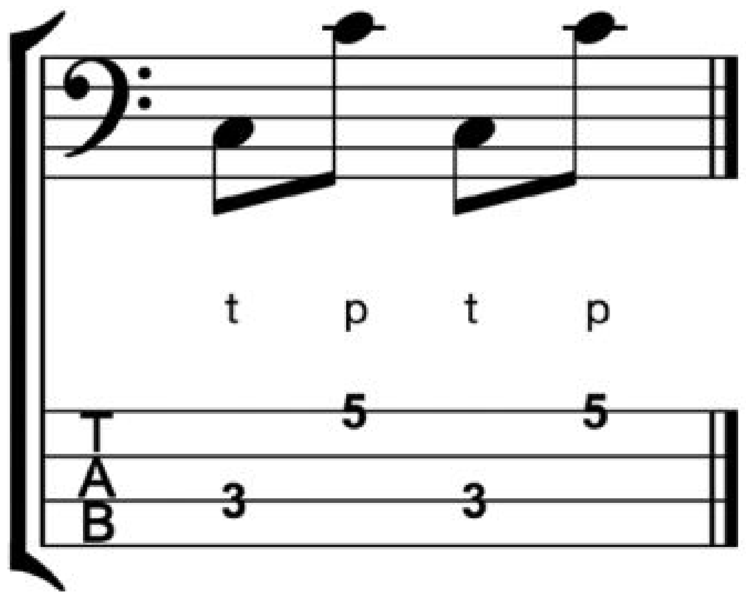
The Stave: most music written for the bass guitar uses the bass clef. The example to the right shows the placement of the notes on the stave.

Tablature: this is a graphical representation of the music. Each horizontal line corresponds with a string on the bass guitar, with the lowest line representing the lowest pitched string (E). The numbers represent the frets to be played. Numbers stacked vertically indicate notes that are played together. Where basses with five or six strings are required, the tablature stave will have five or six lines as necessary.



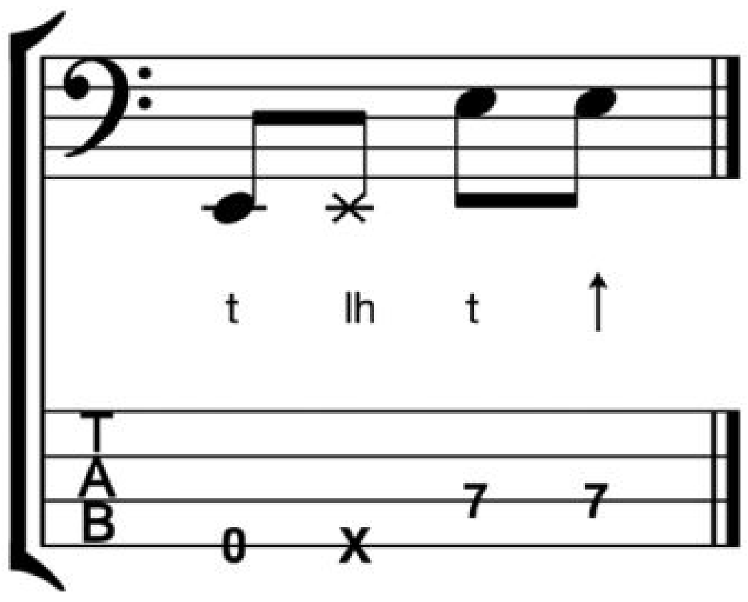
Notes shown in brackets indicate that a note has been tied over from a previous bar.

PLAYING TECHNIQUES



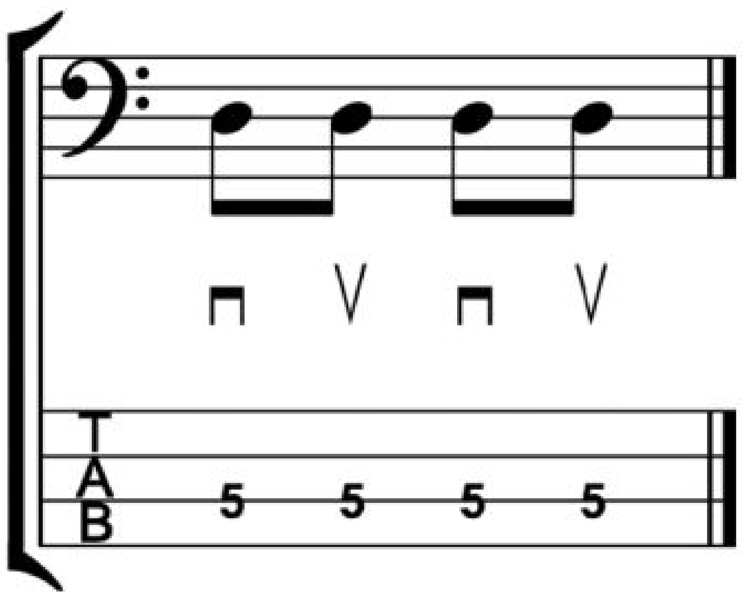
SLAP AND POP TECHNIQUE

Notes slapped with the thumb are marked with a 't', notes popped with the fingers marked with a 'p'



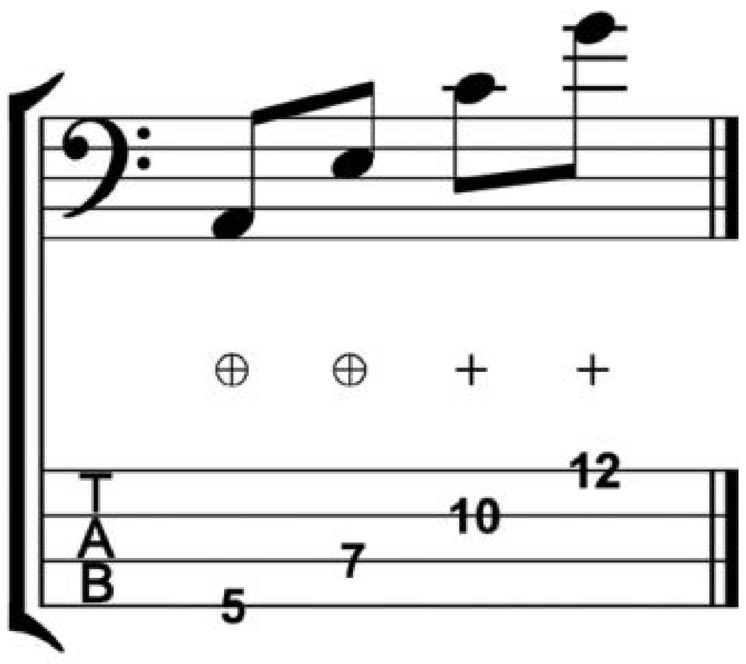
ADVANCED SLAP TECHNIQUE

Fretting hand slaps are marked 'lh' and double thumbing upstrokes are shown with an upward pointing arrow



PLECTRUM TECHNIQUE

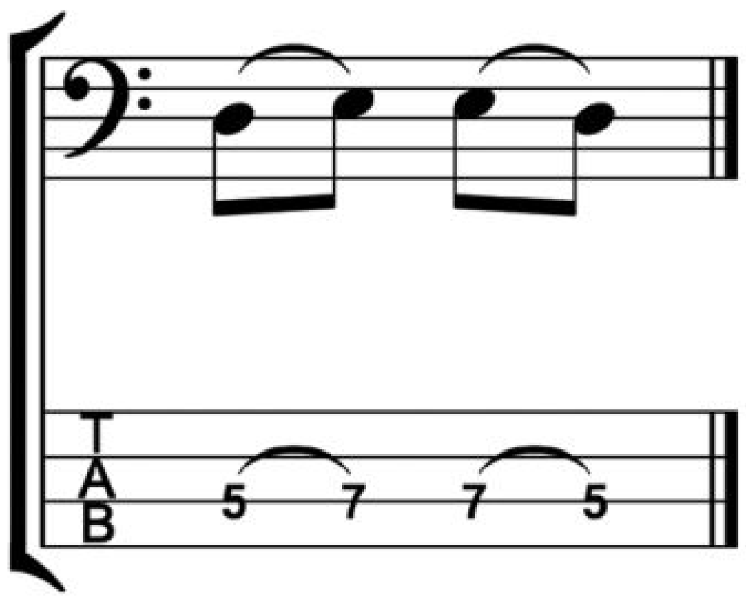
Where necessary, down and upstrokes with the pick will be shown using these symbols (down-up-down-up)



TAPPING TECHNIQUES

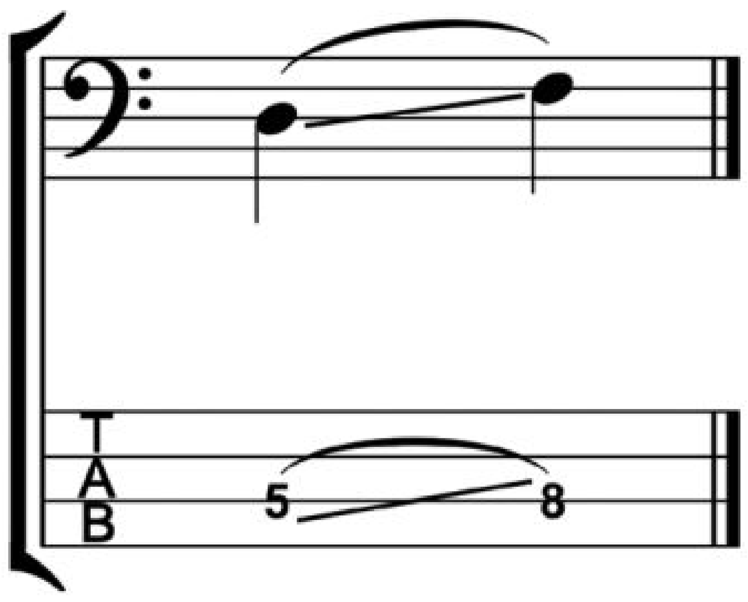
Fretting hand taps are shown with a '+' in a circle. Picking hand taps are shown with '+'. Specific fingers will be shown with numbers if necessary

FRETTING TECHNIQUES



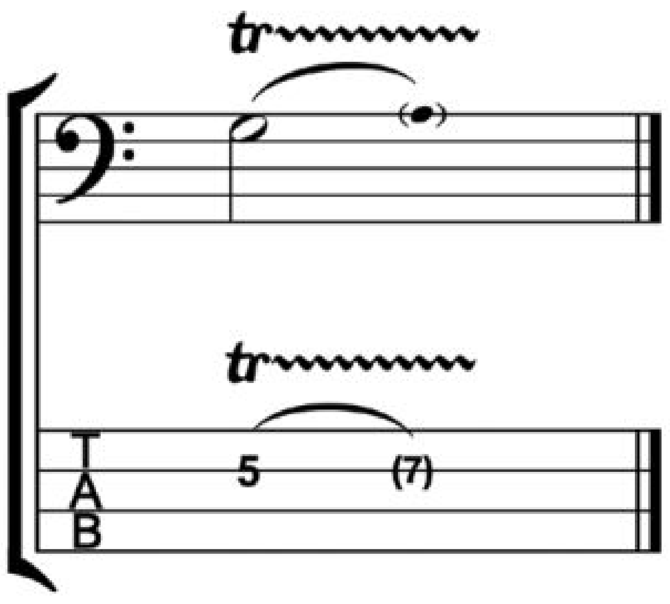
HAMMER-ON AND PULL-OFF

Hammer-ons and pull-offs are shown with a slur over the notes. Only the first note is plucked by the picking hand



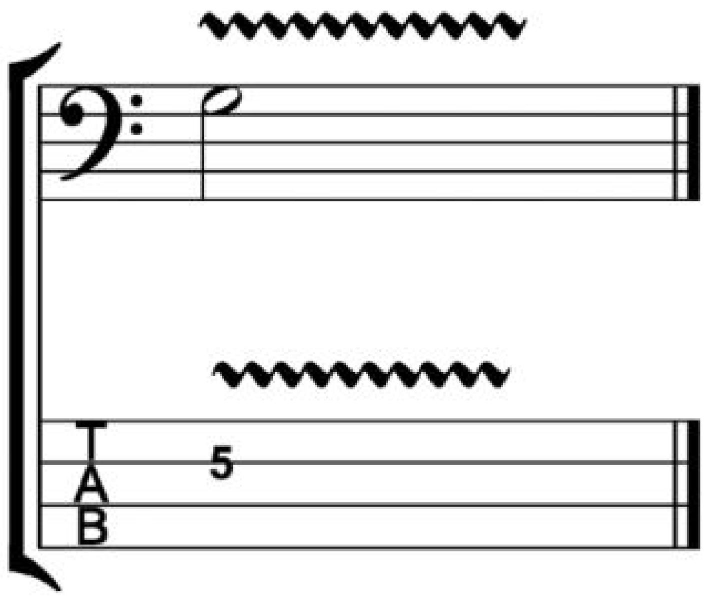
SLIDE (GLISSANDO)

Slides are performed by playing the first note then sliding the fretting finger up to the second note



TRILLS

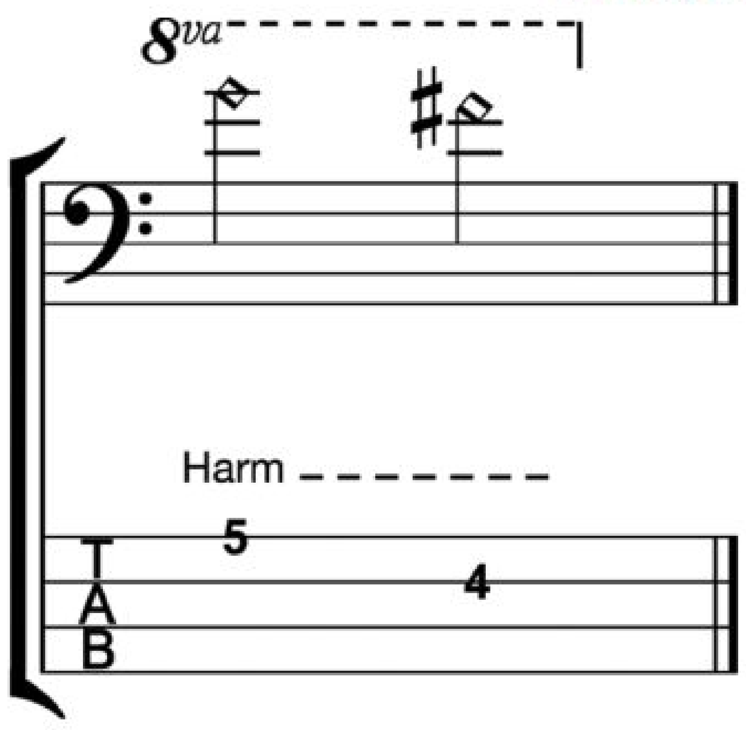
Trills are performed by rapidly alternating between the two notes shown using hammer-ons and pull-offs



VIBRATO

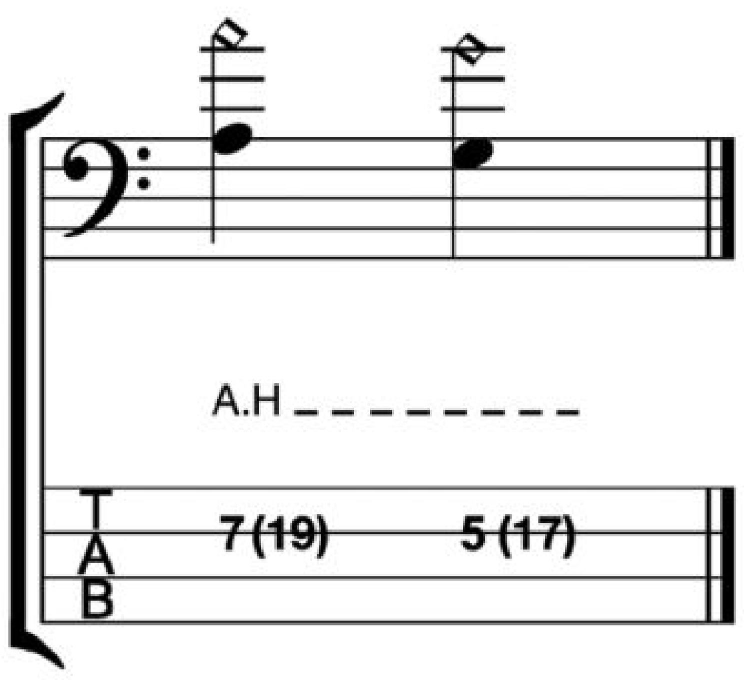
The pitch of the note is altered by repeatedly bending the string up and back with the fretting finger

PLAYING HARMONICS



NATURAL HARMONICS

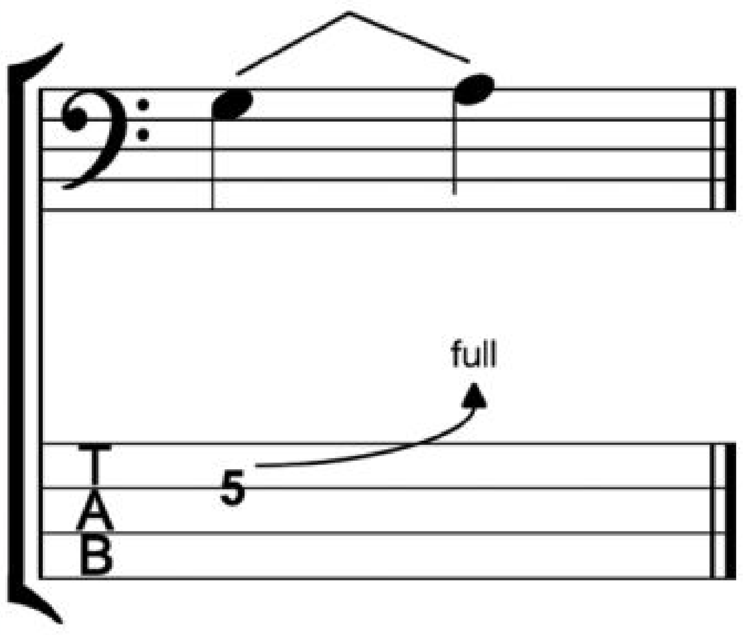
The note is played as a harmonic by lightly touching the string above the fret indicated



ARTIFICIAL HARMONICS

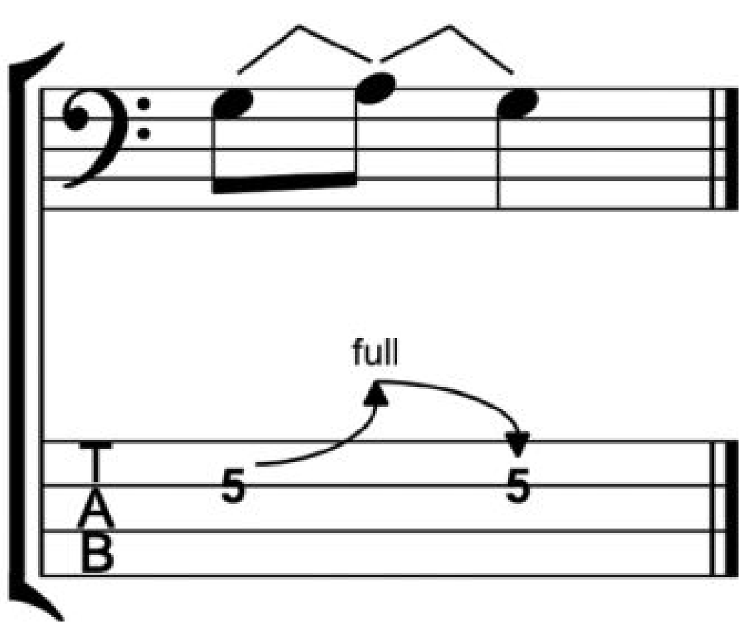
Pluck the string while fretting the lower note and placing the edge of the picking hand thumb an octave higher (the note shown in brackets)

BENDING NOTES



BEND

The note is bent upwards to the interval specified: ½ = semitone, full = tone



BEND AND RELEASE

The note is bent up to the interval indicated then released back to its original pitch

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THE FRONT LINE

Want to make it as a professional bassist? Listen up as BGM's world-class bass team reports back from the tourbus

THE JAZZ BASSIST

RUTH GOLLER

Jazz ninja Ruth hails a bass hero

Tim Lefebvre is one of the electric bass players who has influenced my playing the most. I remember seeing him play in a small London club many years ago, and was completely blown away by him. I could relate to his energy when he was playing, and I loved his musical choices.

I enjoyed seeing him embrace a lot of freedom within a very composed musical situation, and realised that his character still fit in perfectly within the overall sound. He made the band feel really fresh and inventive at all times. He was taking risks by sometimes making such strong statements that the whole band would suddenly have to change direction. There were so many surprises for me, yet somehow his energetic playing was very familiar too. I almost felt as if I could feel what he was feeling when he was playing, but of course I'll never find out if that was true. I like to think there is some kind of musical connection. I loved that his set-up was simple – only octaver and distortion – yet he managed to get so many textures out of his bass, and that is something I can relate to well. My electric bass also has a very simple set-up, with only a volume and tone dial. With those, plus fingers or plectrum, I try to get very specific sounds according to different tunes and projects. I like to make the most out of the few options I have before adding something new. I first discovered Tim's playing by listening to the trio with Wayne Krantz and Keith Carlock on an album called *Greenwich Mean* which is in itself brilliant, but the thing that stuck with me the most was the rhythm section. Generally the music seemed quite clean to me, but there was something about Tim's playing and tone that shook the whole thing up for me and made it very exciting. Another thing I love about him is how versatile he is. He can be an unleashed beast playing the bass like a punk musician, but he also really fits his part in a country-folk group, the Tedeschi Trucks Band. If you check out the sheer variety of things he has done, you'll realise how difficult it is to label him – and that's exactly what I admire.

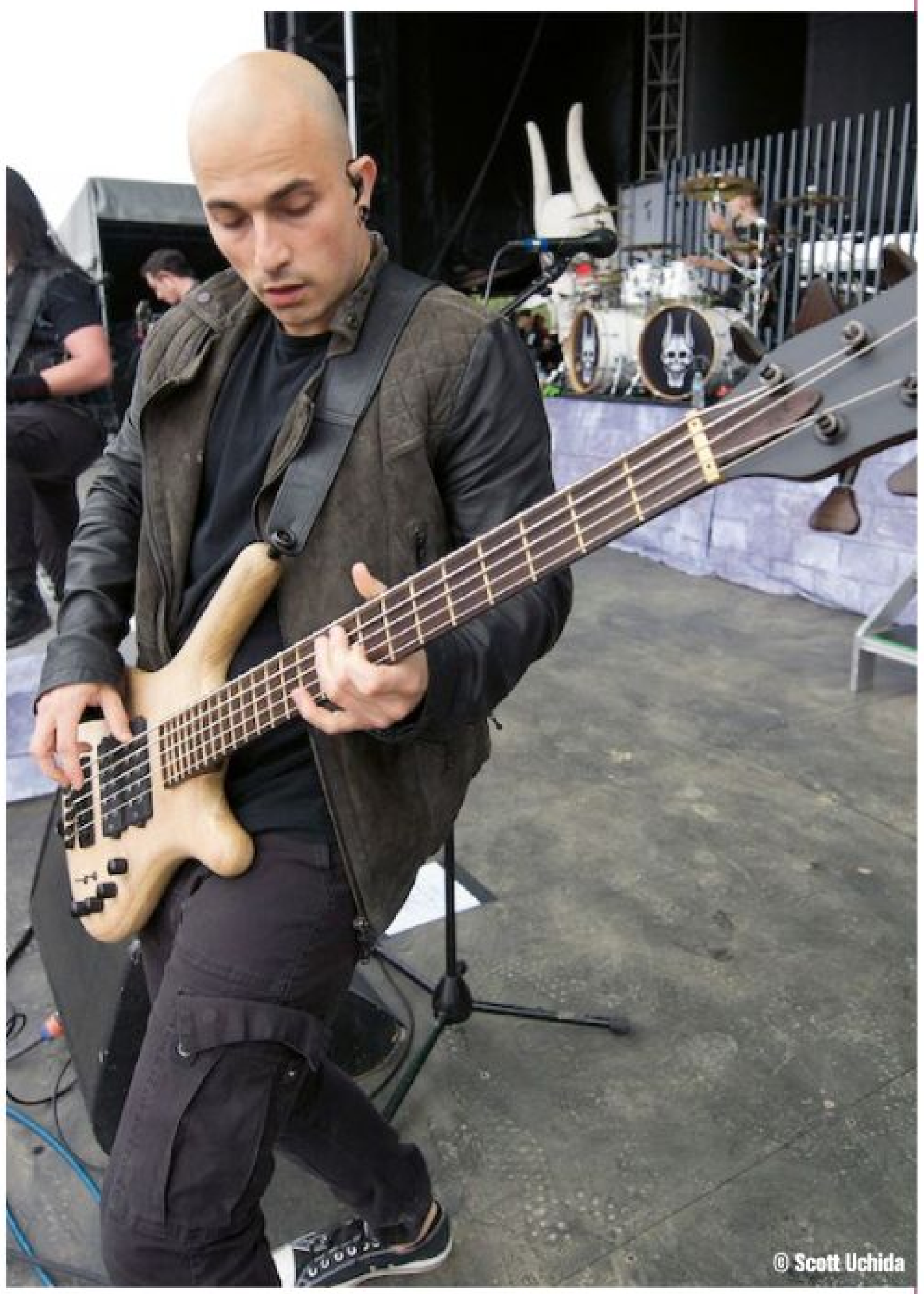
www.ruthgoller.com

THE METALHEAD

PAOLO GREGOLETTO

After four years on this page, Trivium bassist Paolo says farewell

I knew that one day I was going to have to write a final column for *BGM*, and that day has finally arrived. I feel that it's time to step back and let someone else have a chance to write about their experiences with the instrument, and I want to thank Joel for giving me the chance to write these words. I never imagined I'd be a bass player touring the world, let alone writing a monthly column for this magazine. It's made me more introspective about my own playing and about the instrument, even reconsidering what it means to be a bass player in my genre of music.



© Scott Uchida

Here are a few final thoughts on my playing and what's going on in the bass world, as I see it. Switching to Warwick and traveling over to Germany for the annual gathering at their headquarters opened my eyes to the depth of talent within the bass community. Sometimes you need to venture out of the niche you live in to really learn more about the instrument you play. The rig that I started out with when I first began my column has changed a bit, but the idea has remained the same – compact for travel, plus a reliably consistent tone. From a SansAmp to a Kemper, from entry-level Shure in-ear monitors to JH-16s, from BC Rich to Warwick, my quest for a perfect tone has been a slow but steady build towards what I consider the perfect set-up for all venue sizes and all types

> "FINALLY, THANK YOU FOR READING MY THOUGHTS AND GIVING ME A CHANCE TO IMPART SOME OF MY KNOWLEDGE TO YOU. I HOPE IT'S BEEN ENJOYABLE AND HAS GIVEN YOU A LAUGH FROM TIME TO TIME"

of travel. I can only imagine the next 10 years of tech upgrades to our gear and how much better it can sound, and how much smaller the rigs can get without any sacrifice in tone.

Writing about bass playing is something I hope to continue in the future. I still feel that I have a lifetime of experience ahead of me that I will need to gain in order to write about bass with true authority. Maybe this is more of a Kiss farewell than a Led Zeppelin…

Finally, thank you for reading my thoughts and giving me a chance to impart some of my knowledge to you. I hope it's been enjoyable and has given you a laugh from time to time. My last words of advice to players of all experience levels: enjoy the ride, never stop experimenting and discovering new music – and most importantly, never forget how fun it was to plug in to an amp for the first time, hear the notes ring out, and feel like there was an entire new world ahead of you with the bass guitar in your hands.

www.trivium.org

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THE ALTERNATIVE ROCKER

MICHAEL MCKEEGAN

Therapy?'s bass warrior Mike on the joys of festivals

© www.ashleybird.com

With festival season started and with a few under our belt, it's nice to reflect on what a great experience, even for a veteran of 25-plus years, they can be. As well as a brilliant playing exercise, festivals are a great leveller and there are lots of things to be learnt from watching the other bands, whether they're further up or down the bill. I particularly like to have a quick look around the other bands' gear and check out interesting bass rigs and pedal set-ups. Most bands and crew are happy to chat about their equipment and it can be enlightening seeing how other players run their signal path. Occasionally, after making a random query, I've been offered a quick go on some very famous artists' gear, which is a nice bonus in itself. Once I get over my gear envy, I try and watch as many bands as possible and see which elements of their production work well in a festival setting. It's always an eye-opener to see how bands arrange themselves onstage and how they use risers. I don't think everyone needs huge ego ramps to project themselves, if the band members are putting out a serious bit of energy – but playing later in the evening or in a covered tent, lighting and backdrops can play a big part in putting across a more effective show. Another good thing is seeing how bands try and maximise their stage time, as normally a festival set is a curtailed version of their regular one. I've seen bands do cool things where they've worked up medleys, segues or cut lengthy intros so they can cram the maximum number of tunes into their set. Remember, apart from the communal vibe, enjoying the other music, musicians and audience reactions, festivals are a goldmine for learning better and different ways to put across a great performance.

www.therapyquestionmark.co.uk

THE EXTENDED-RANGE SPECIALIST

STEWART MCKINSEY

ERB-tweaking hero McKinsey goes solo

After several columns writing about individual techniques, it's now time to start tying them all together and approach solo playing. For our purposes, that means both playing alone on stage or stepping into the spotlight of an ensemble performance. I've written before about thinking as a composer as well as an instrumentalist, so let's put that into effect. A solo should communicate something. If it is a vehicle for you to demonstrate some technical aspect of your musicianship, then you already have your framework. If you've composed the solo before you execute it, then you should have plenty of time to prepare what it is you're going to state through your bass. Even in these situations, however, there are unexpected things which may arise and so your practical knowledge of all the things we've examined so far, and your knowledge of the music itself are about to face the acid test. Have you considered the arc of the solo? It should tell a story, and so it needs a beginning, a middle and an ending. This may be stating a melodic theme, working through some variations and then coming back to the opening motif. It could be about something emotional, or a specific event. Whatever it is, you are developing a vocabulary and a palette of skills to express yourself. Do you want to start softly or boldly? Are you building to a gradual or a dramatic crescendo? Will you stay in one area of the fingerboard or are you going to move across the neck? How much space should you employ? How can playing with time or phrasing better convey your story? How much improvisation, if any, will there be? As an artist you need to balance what you're capable of doing physically with what is best for the music. We're all serving our ego to different degrees, so as you begin you need some idea of whether this is predominantly an exercise of control or if you're going to turn over to the music and be in the moment. In my next instalments we'll look at the differences between a composed solo piece, where it's you alone on stage, taking the melodic and harmonic reins of the song that a band is performing. Until then, please consider what you want to communicate and how you're going to do it with the knowledge at your command.

www.facebook.com + search 'Stewart McKinsey'

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ELLEN O'REILLY

Beginner's bass guru Ellen hits the diminished triad

Last month we had a look at the augmented triad, the third in this series of columns specialising in these incredibly useful three-note chords and arpeggios. We had previously looked at the major and minor triad. This time we will be discussing our fourth and final triad: the diminished.

APP EXTRA
Download the Bass app for extra content

As we've seen in the previous columns, triads are made up of three notes and follow a simple formula: root, 3rd and 5th. The quality (or type) of 3rd and 5th determines what kind of triad you're playing. Here's a recap of the formulas of the four types:

Major triad	**Root, major 3rd and perfect 5th**
Minor triad	**Root, minor 3rd and perfect 5th**
Augmented triad	**Root, major 3rd and #5th**
Diminished triad	**Root, minor 3rd and b5th**

The diminished triad is closely related to the minor as it has a minor 3rd, but what makes it sound even 'sadder' or 'darker' than its cousin is the flattened 5th. Neither the augmented nor the diminished triad is as commonly used as the major and minor, but they do have a very distinctive sound and work well with specific kinds of chords.

The diminished triad always sounds perfect with a minor 7 flat 5 chord or min7b5 (or as it is sometimes known, -7b5, or half diminished chord). In this case we will use C as our root, which will give us a Cmin7b5 (or C half diminished chord), which can also be written using the following symbol: Cº.

Now that you know what makes up a diminished triad, it's time to look at it in all its inversions. Remember, inversions mean that you play a triad in sequence starting from either the root, 3rd or 5th. First up is the root position, followed by the 1st and 2nd inversions, played as follows:

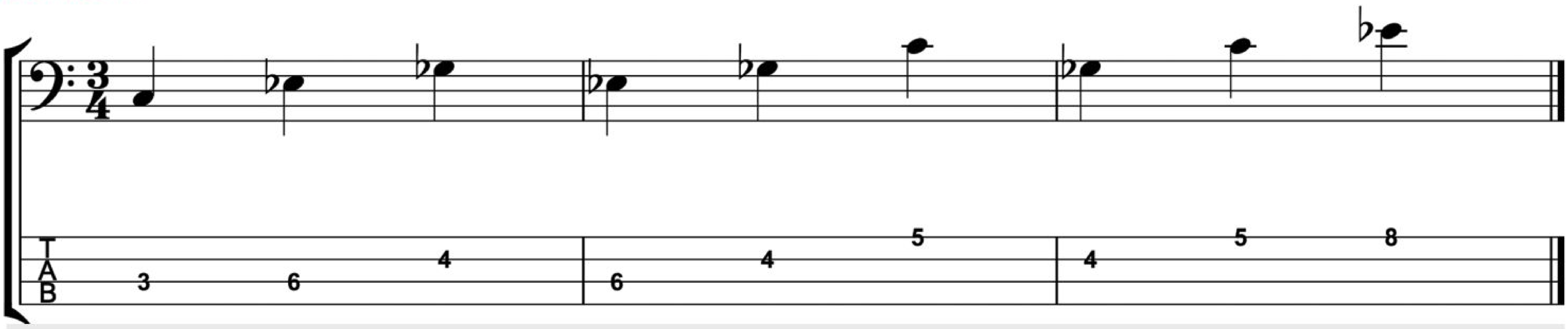
> "IF YOU TAKE A LOOK AT THE INTERVALS BETWEEN EACH OF THE NOTES, THEY ARE MADE UP OF TWO MINOR 3RDS STACKED ON TOP OF ONE ANOTHER. IN OTHER WORDS, MINOR 3RD + MINOR 3RD = DIMINISHED"

Root position	**Root, minor 3rd, b5th**
1st inversion	**Minor 3rd, b5th, root**
2nd inversion	**b5th, root, minor 3rd**

As seen on the stave, if we use the root of C, then our minor 3rd and flattened 5th will be made up of C, Eb and Gb. This sequence of notes makes up our root position. This means that our 1st inversion will be Eb, Gb and C. Our 2nd inversion will then be Gb, C and Eb. If you take a look at the intervals between each of the notes, they are made up of two minor 3rds stacked on top of one another, in other words; minor 3rd + minor 3rd = diminished.

The tab below the notation is a suggestion for how to place your fingers when playing these inversions. Come up with your own ways of playing them if you prefer. It is entirely up to you how you play them, but I would advise you to play whatever positioning feels better for you so as not to cause any strain or injury. Always remember: if you feel pain, stop playing. Take regular breaks when practising and be sure to avoid those dreaded repetitive strain injuries. Now, have fun with all the triads you have learned. Play with a keys or guitar player if you can – there's no better way to get all this into your head!

EXAMPLE 1



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PAUL GEARY

Step into different time signatures with tech ninja Geary

This month I'd like to take a look at some odd time signatures and how to play them effectively. We're all familiar with 4/4, so let's take three other common signatures, 5/4, 7/4 and 3/4.

When looking at a time signature for the first time, it is important to remember that the number on top tells us how many beats the bar adds up to. The number below tells what they are. For instance, 4/4 means that the bar adds up to four crotchet beats. 5/4 means that the bar adds up to five crotchet beats, and 7/4 means that the bar adds up to seven crotchet beats. You may also have seen 3/4, where the bar adds up to just three crotchet beats, and a slight variation in 6/8, where the bar adds up to six eighth notes.

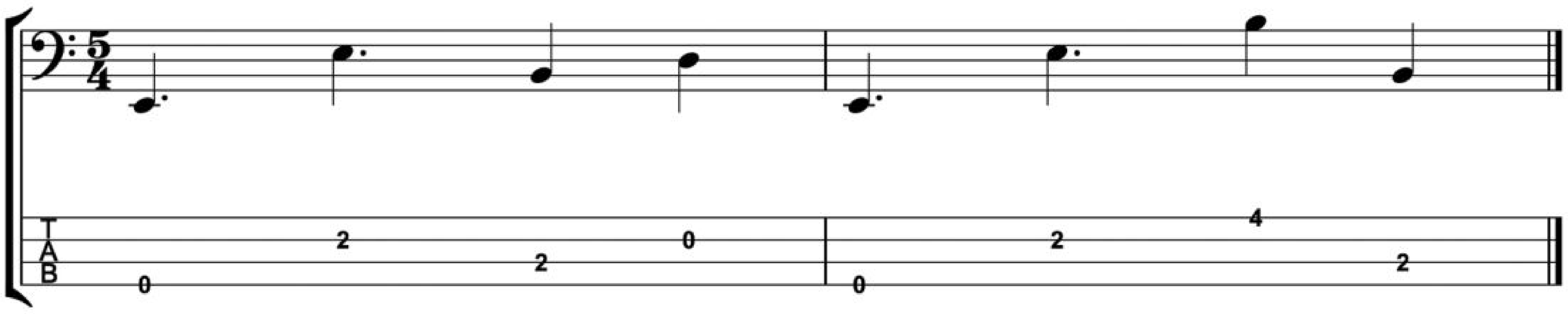
The next technique I would like to look at is metric modulation. This means changing the pulse and rhythm of a piece of music by displacing the beats. We can superimpose a time signature on to another, which sounds tricky, but really isn't if you lock into the pulse and feel of the line. Ready? Let's go!

EXAMPLE 1

This line is in 5/4. We start it with a dotted crotchet played on the open E string. Remember that the dot increases the note by half its value. The second note we play is another dotted E crotchet, but this time played up the octave on the second fret of the D string. To finish the bar off we play two crotchets, one on the B note, played at the second fret of the A string, and the other on the open D string. For variation and articulation, try stretching up to the fifth fret on the A string to play the D. This will create tonal contrast with the D being played at the fifth fret. The string is thicker so the tone of the D will be deeper and fatter.

In bar two, the first two notes stay the same and then we jump up to a crotchet played on a high B. This note is played at the fourth fret of the G string. To finish the line we drop down to a low B crotchet played at the second fret of the A string. Set your metronome or drum machine to 80BPM and 5/4, with an accented click or beat on the first note (referred to as 'the one').

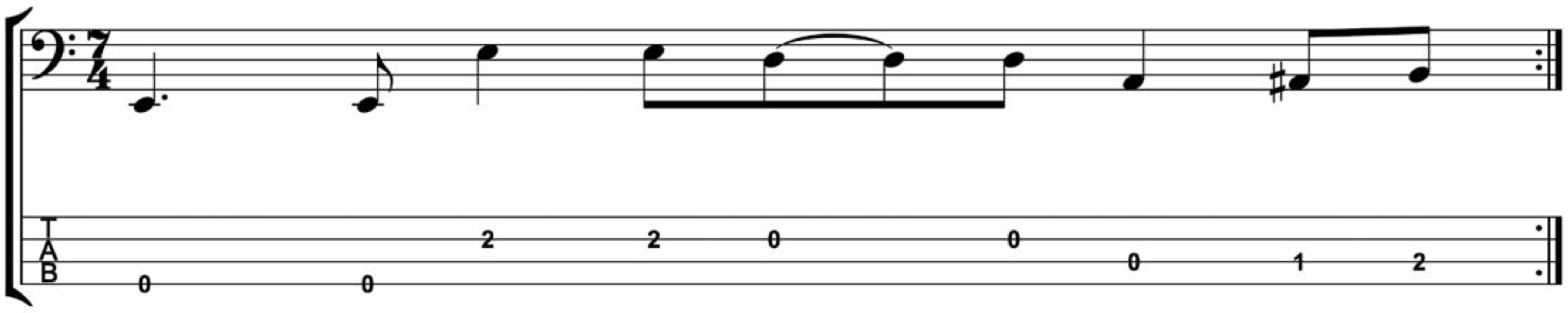
Practise the line until you have it feeling right. After a while you should be able to feel the fundamental pulse, and where 'the one' is within the two bars.



EXAMPLE 2

This line is in 7/4. The bar adds up to seven crotchet beats. We start the bar with a dotted crotchet played on an open E string, followed by the same note but this time played as a quaver or eighth note. Switch to a high crotchet E, played at the second fret of the D string. We then have an eighth note played at the same point followed by a tied eighth note on D. This note can be played on the open D string, or at the fifth fret of the A string. Make sure you let the note ring over to the second eighth note and then finish the figure on the same pitch with a D eighth note. Play the low A crotchet either on the open string or at the fifth fret of the E string. The line finishes with two eighth notes on Ab, first fret A string (enharmonic Bb) and then B natural, second fret A string.

As before, set your metronome or drum machine to 7/4 and try to establish the pulse. The important thing to remember is to feel 'the one'. Once you have established this, the line will begin to flow.

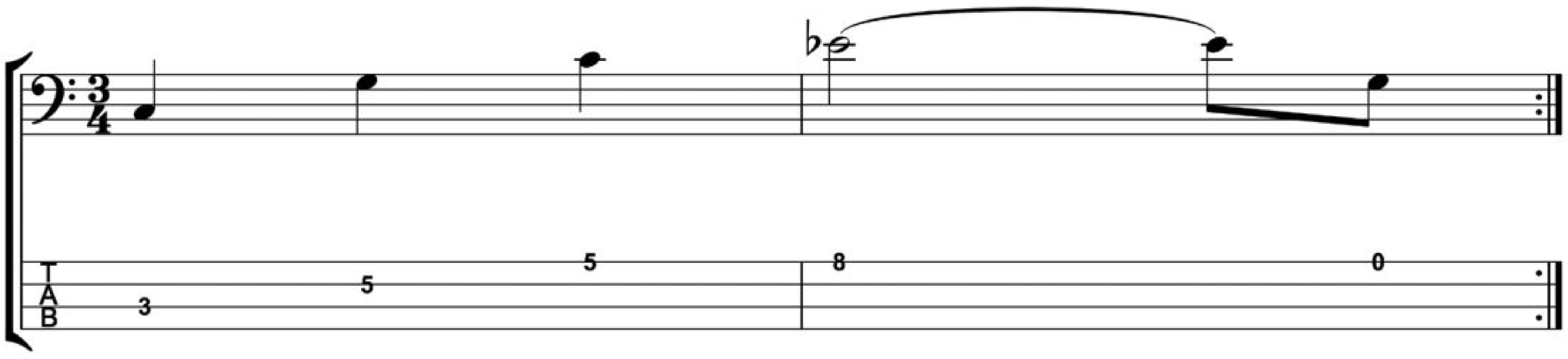


EXAMPLE 3

Next we have a swing line in 3/4. The first bar is just three crotchets, the first being played on low C at the third fret of the A string, followed by the perfect 5th on G at the fifth fret of the D string. Finally we have the octave of C played at the fifth fret of the G string.

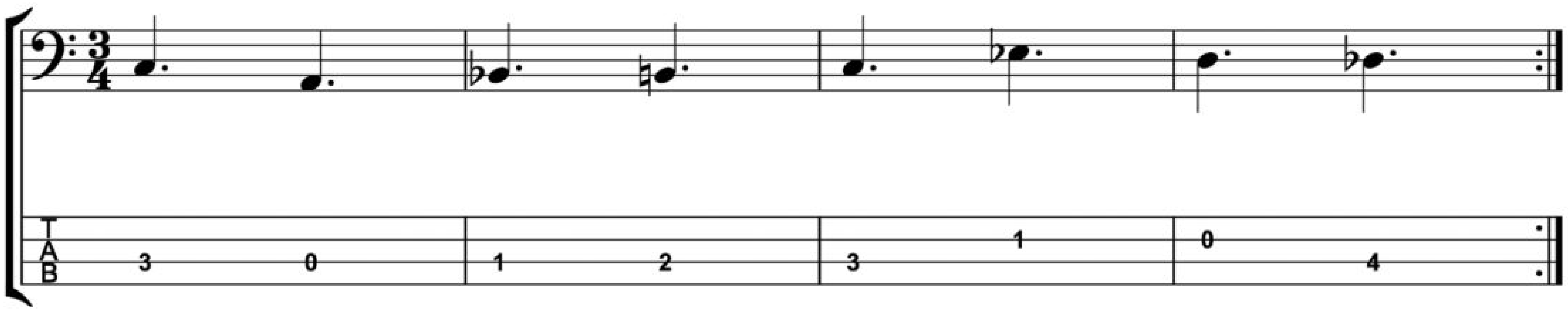
The second bar starts with a high E# minim or half note. This is played at the eighth fret of the G string and tied over to an eighth note. The bar finishes with an eighth note G played on the open string.

Set your click to 3/4 and the tempo to 80BPM. If you have access to a recorder, perhaps on your phone, try recording yourself playing this line. When you have finished, play back the recording and try playing **example 4** at the same time.



EXAMPLE 4

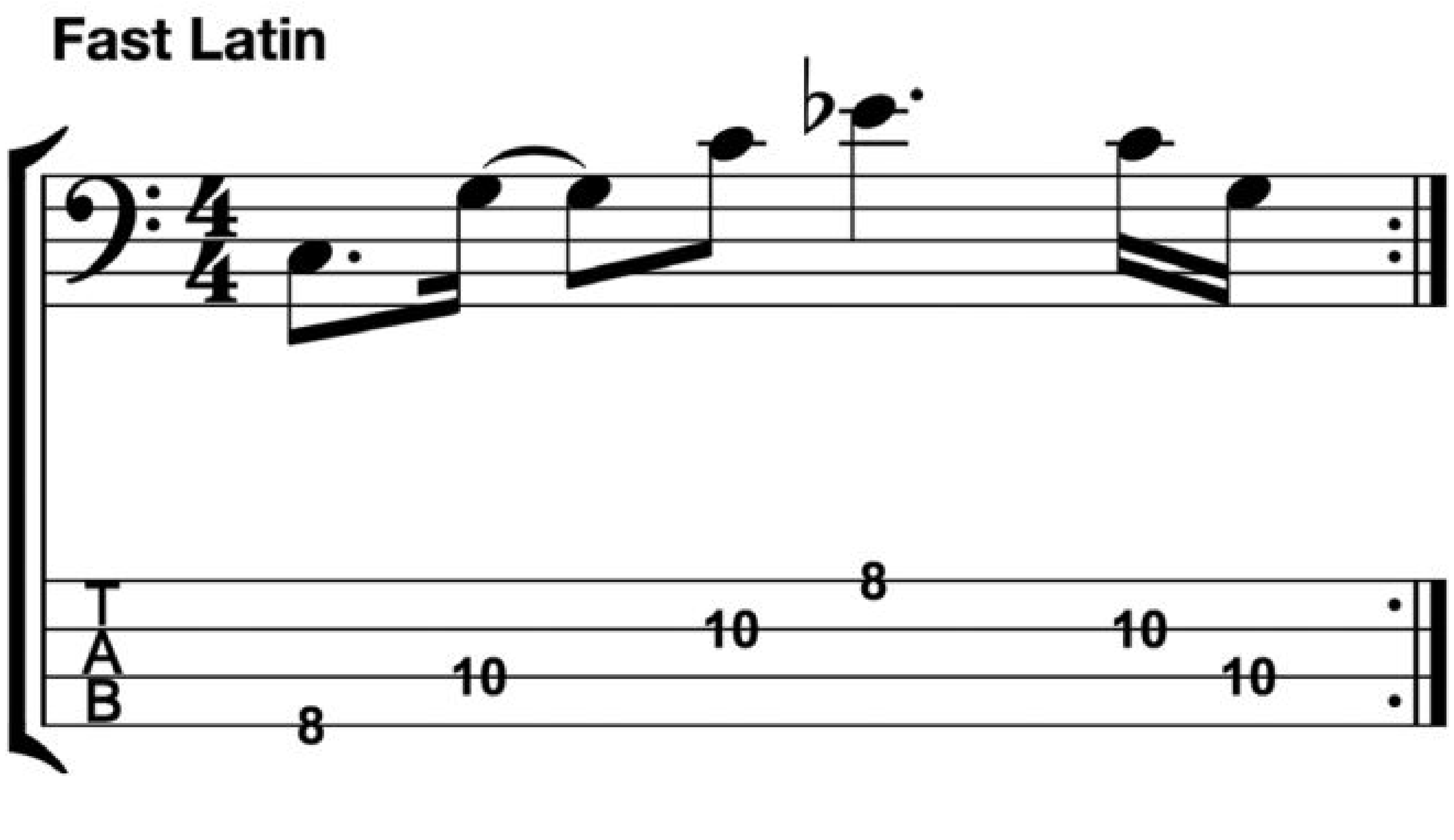
As you begin to play the dotted crotchets, you will feel a pull on the time and fundamental pulse of the piece. Once you are confident with these two examples, try playing the 4/4 Latin line from **example 5** against the 3/4 swing.



EXAMPLE 5

We have a dotted eighth note on the low C, played at the eighth fret of the E string, and then a sixteenth note tied to an eighth note on a G, played at the tenth fret of the A string. Next is a C note played at the tenth fret of the D string followed by an Eb on the eighth fret of the G string. The bar is finished off by two sixteenth notes on C and G. This feel is metric modulation as you superimpose and displace the beats within each time signature.

Finally, try playing the chord progression in **example 6**, taking the roots of the chords followed by the perfect 5th. Use both 3/4 and 4/4.



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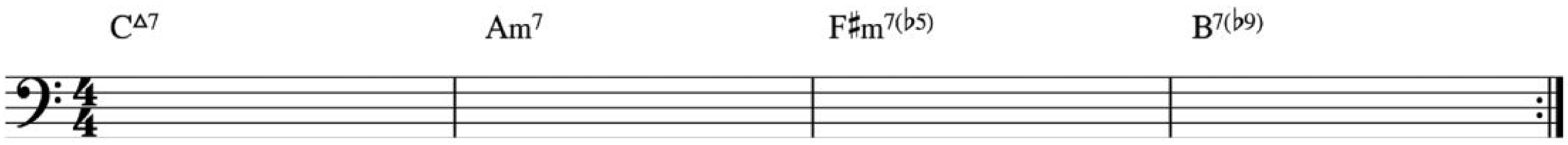
> "WE CAN SUPERIMPOSE ONE TIME SIGNATURE ONTO ANOTHER — THAT SOUNDS TRICKY, BUT REALLY ISN'T, IF YOU LOCK IN"

EXAMPLE 6

This is a fun exercise with some real world applications. The challenge is then to find a real living drummer to accompany you. See you next time!



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STUART CLAYTON

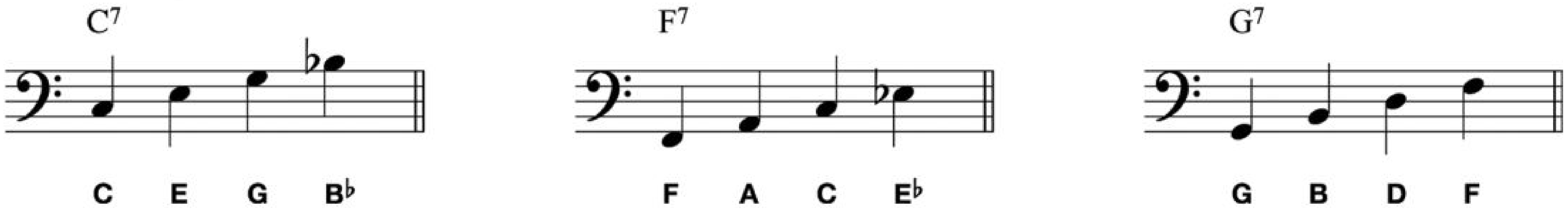
Bass educator Clayton enters the blues zone

Welcome to the second instalment in my series on soloing on the bass guitar. In the last issue we recapped on the construction of seventh chords, placing a focus on learning the notes in them rather than basing our understanding of them on patterns. We played each arpeggio over one octave in various ways, then over two octaves, with the idea being that you should always seek new ways to play each one, thereby exploring the whole fingerboard. As I said last time, this in-depth study of arpeggios should be seen as a long-term project and is not something that will come together overnight.

In this month's column, we are going to look at soloing over a basic three-chord blues pattern. This will be initially done in the key of C and will involve three chords: C7, F7 and G7. As you probably know, the blues uses chords I-IV-V (so in C, those are C, F and G), but all three chords are usually played as dominant sevenths.

The first order of business is to ensure that you fully understand the notes contained in each of these chords. **Example 1** shows them in all their glory.

EXAMPLE 1

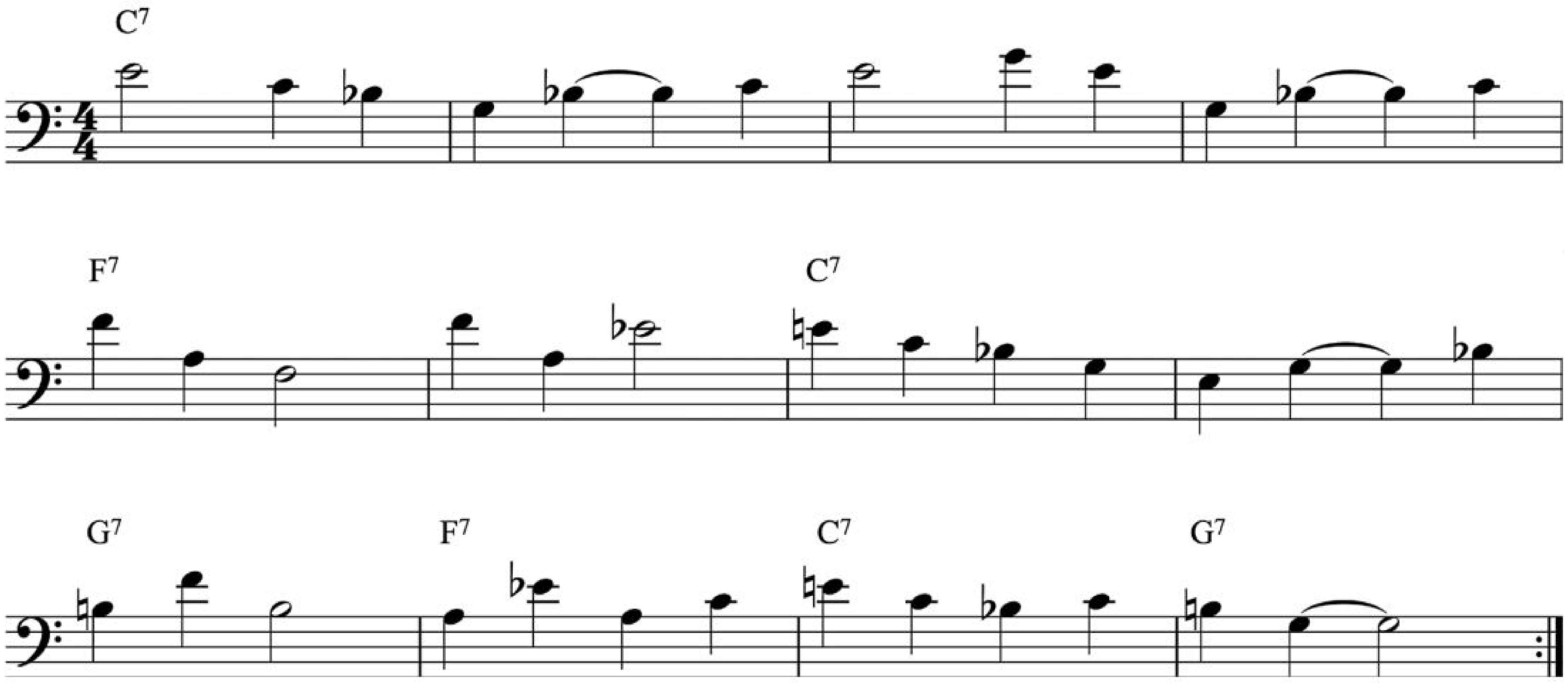


You should initially take some time to play these arpeggios on the bass in as many different ways as you can, as we did in last month's column. Experiment with different positions on the neck, using just one string, two strings, open strings where possible – everything you can think of.

We're now going to experiment with soloing over the blues using just the notes from these chords. While doing so, we're going to limit the rhythms used to just crotchets, minims and semibreves. Doing so will ensure that you can maintain focus on choosing the right notes without worrying too much about which rhythms are used. Note that the solos that you play over this progression are going to be very simple (and quite boring)! This is exactly how they should be at this point. Rest assured that the ability to play faster, more intricate lines will come in time, but for now it's important to be focusing your attention on using the chord tones to their maximum effect.

Example 2 is a sample solo over a C blues that you can learn as a starting point, or merely use as an illustration of what is expected at this stage.

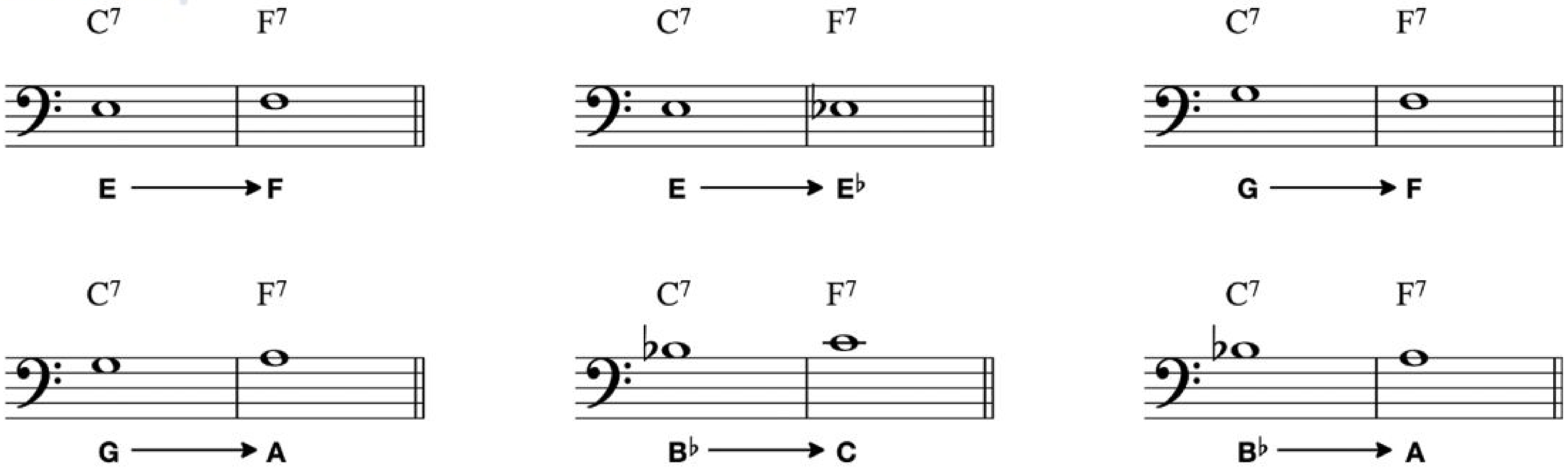
EXAMPLE 2



USING VOICE LEADING

Voice leading is a simple harmonic/melodic technique that you can employ in your solos in order to help them sound smooth. The idea of voice leading is to move to the nearest available note as the chords change. Here's an example: let's say you are playing over a C7 chord and your final note in the bar is E. As the chord changes to F7, you could move to either an F (the root of the new chord), or Eb (the seventh). Either movement is only a step away from E, and both are good examples of voice leading. Using this idea will make your lines smoother. You might not always want to use this concept – you might want a more angular sound sometimes – but it's a great concept to be able to understand when learning to improvise. **Example 3** shows all of the potential ways to voice lead from C7 to F7.

EXAMPLE 3



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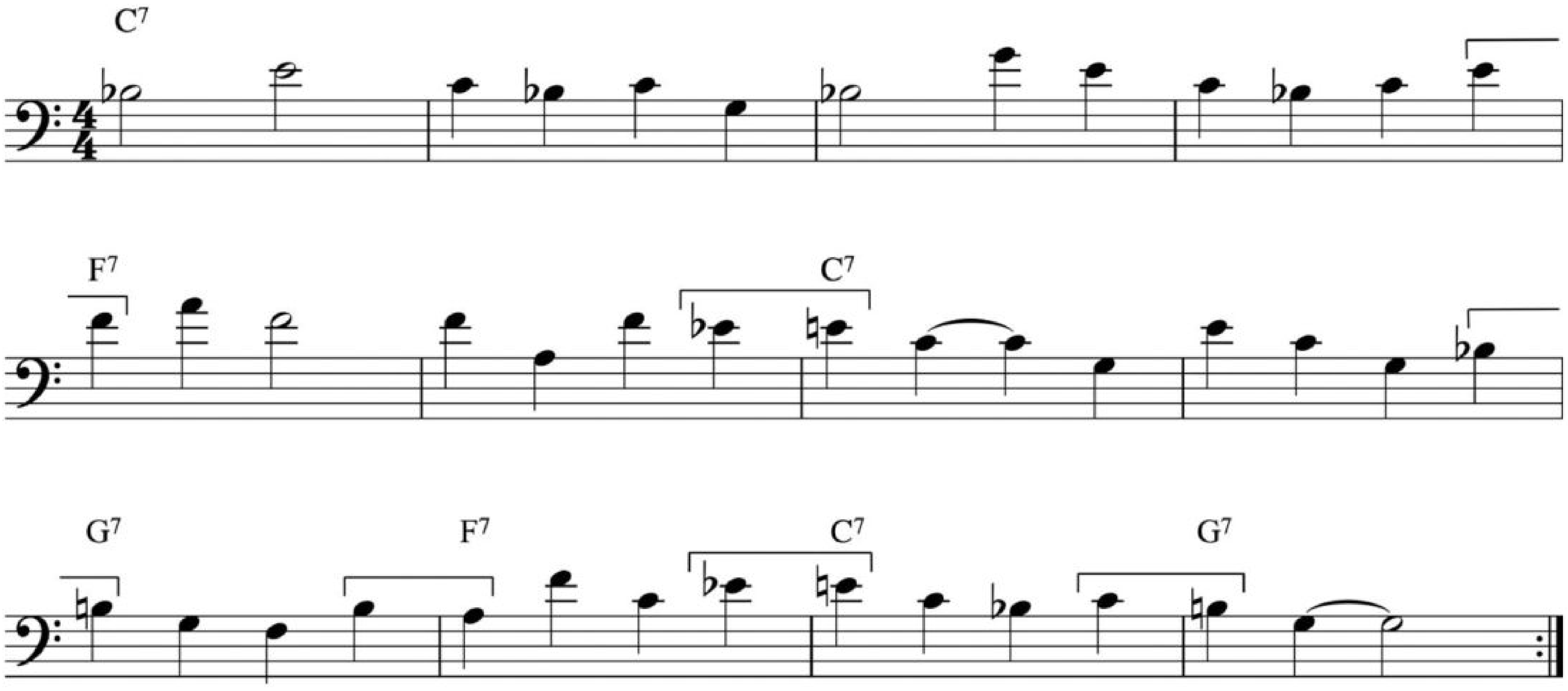
You can of course reverse all of these for when the chords change from F7 back to C7. Now see if you can find all of the possible ways to use voice leading from C7 to G7. **Exercise 4** is another simple solo over the blues, using voice leading where possible. All instances of voice leading have been shown with brackets in the notation.

> "THE ABILITY TO PLAY FASTER, MORE INTRICATE LINES WILL COME IN TIME, BUT FOR NOW IT'S IMPORTANT TO BE FOCUSING YOUR ATTENTION ON USING THE CHORD TONES TO THEIR MAXIMUM EFFECT"

EXAMPLE 4

That's all for this month. Next month, we'll be continuing with the basic blues progression, but adding more rhythms to play with. Until then...



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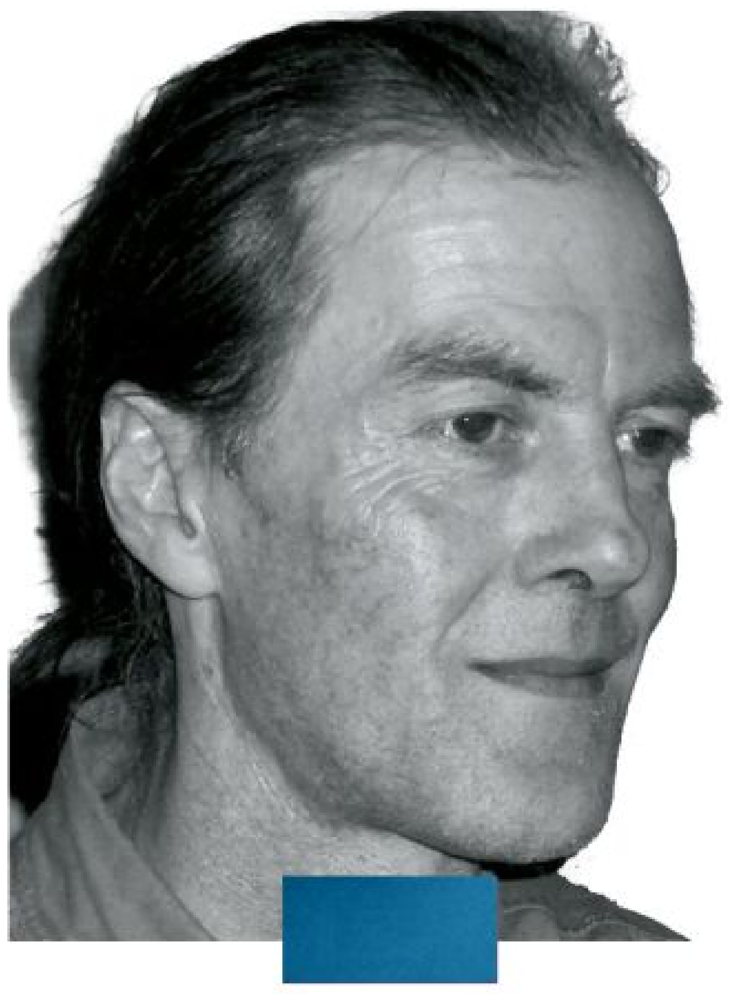


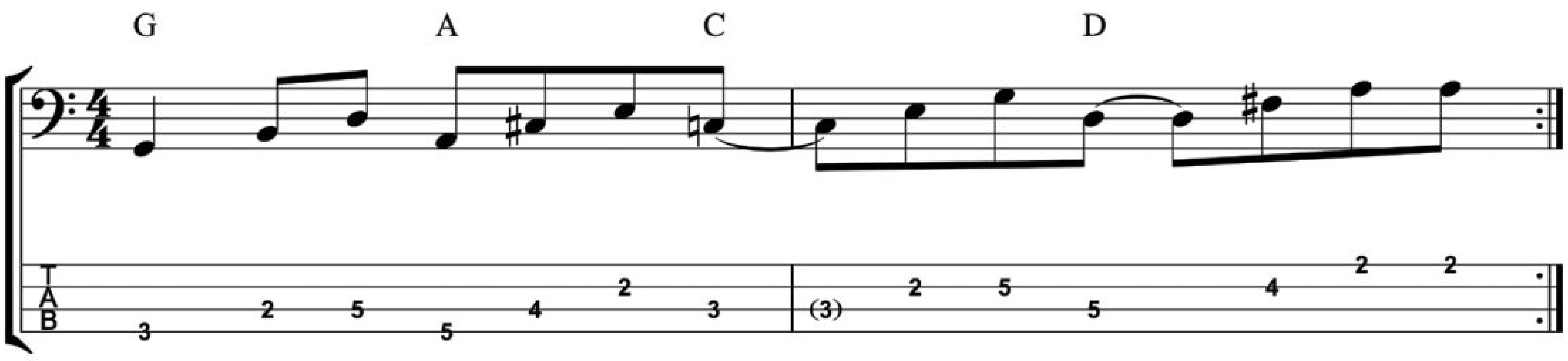
ROB STATHAM

Flex those digits with Prof Statham

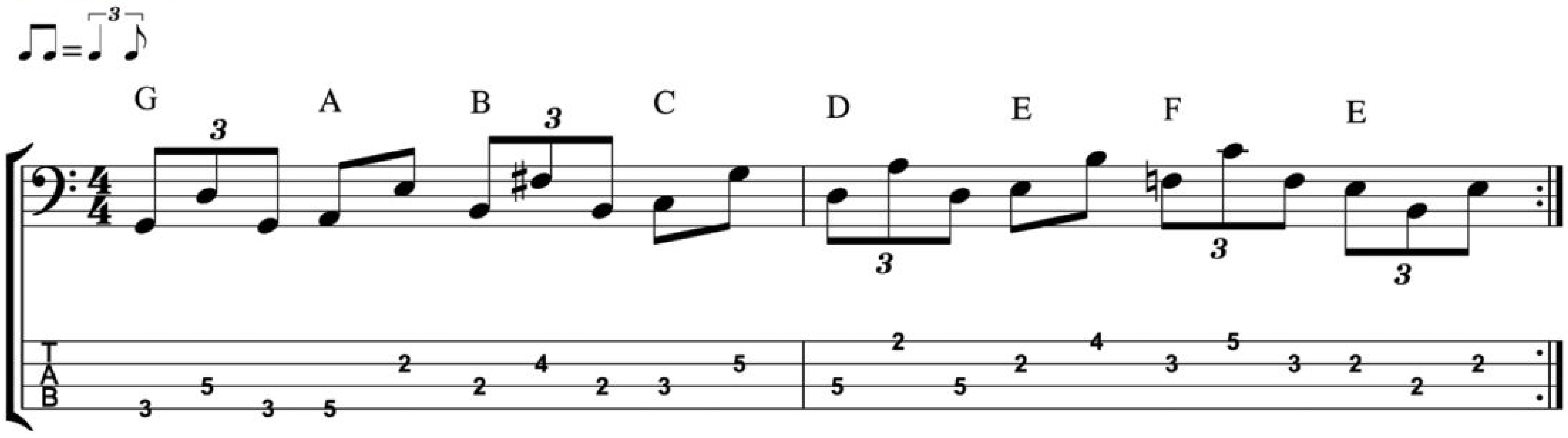
When it comes to finding a good fingering for a bass-line, there is often an understandable tendency to want to play the same musical building blocks with the same pattern. So, for instance, if a bass-line consists of major triads, our first inclination is to take a fingering pattern for a triad and simply move this pattern to each starting note in turn. There's nothing wrong with this, of course, and if we play the bass-line with a good sound, time, and feel then that is the main goal. But what can happen if we do this is that we find that by the time we get to the end of the sequence we have to make a big position shift to get back to our starting point for the repeat. So consider as many options as possible, rather than just the most obvious fingering pattern for an idea. We might save ourselves having to make a succession of position shifts and that we don't actually need to make any.

With this in mind, here are some bass-line examples in which we take the same musical structure for each chord change – the type of line where it's easy to conceive of moving one shape around using a lot of position shifts – and suggest how they might be played with no position shifts at all. I haven't made any particular tempo markings for these ideas, but it's a good idea to practise with a metronome. Find an achievable tempo for these examples, and maybe increase it a little as the fingerings become more comfortable. Also note that in the notation, it's the tab that provides the relevant information in these cases.

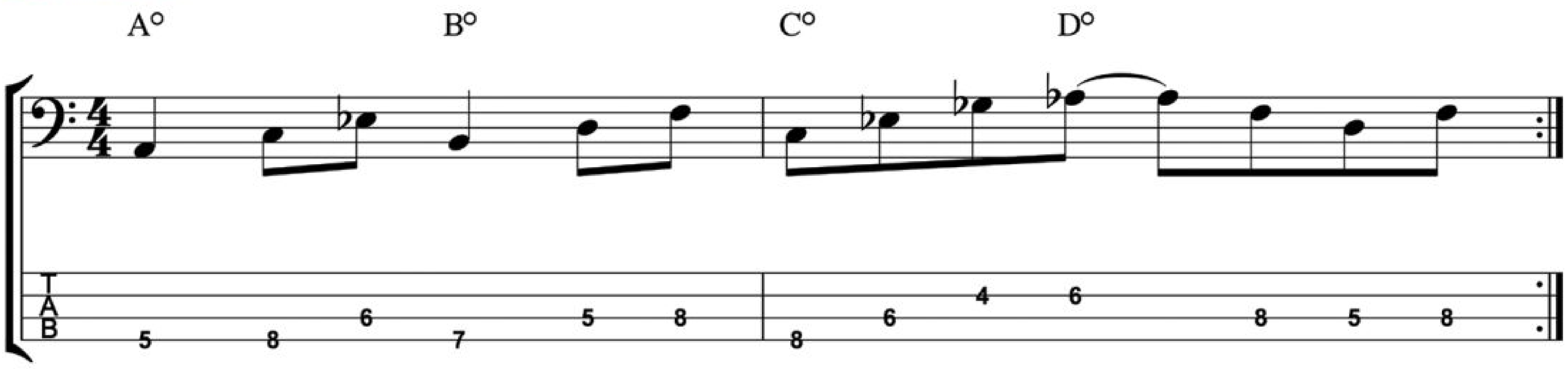
EXAMPLE 1



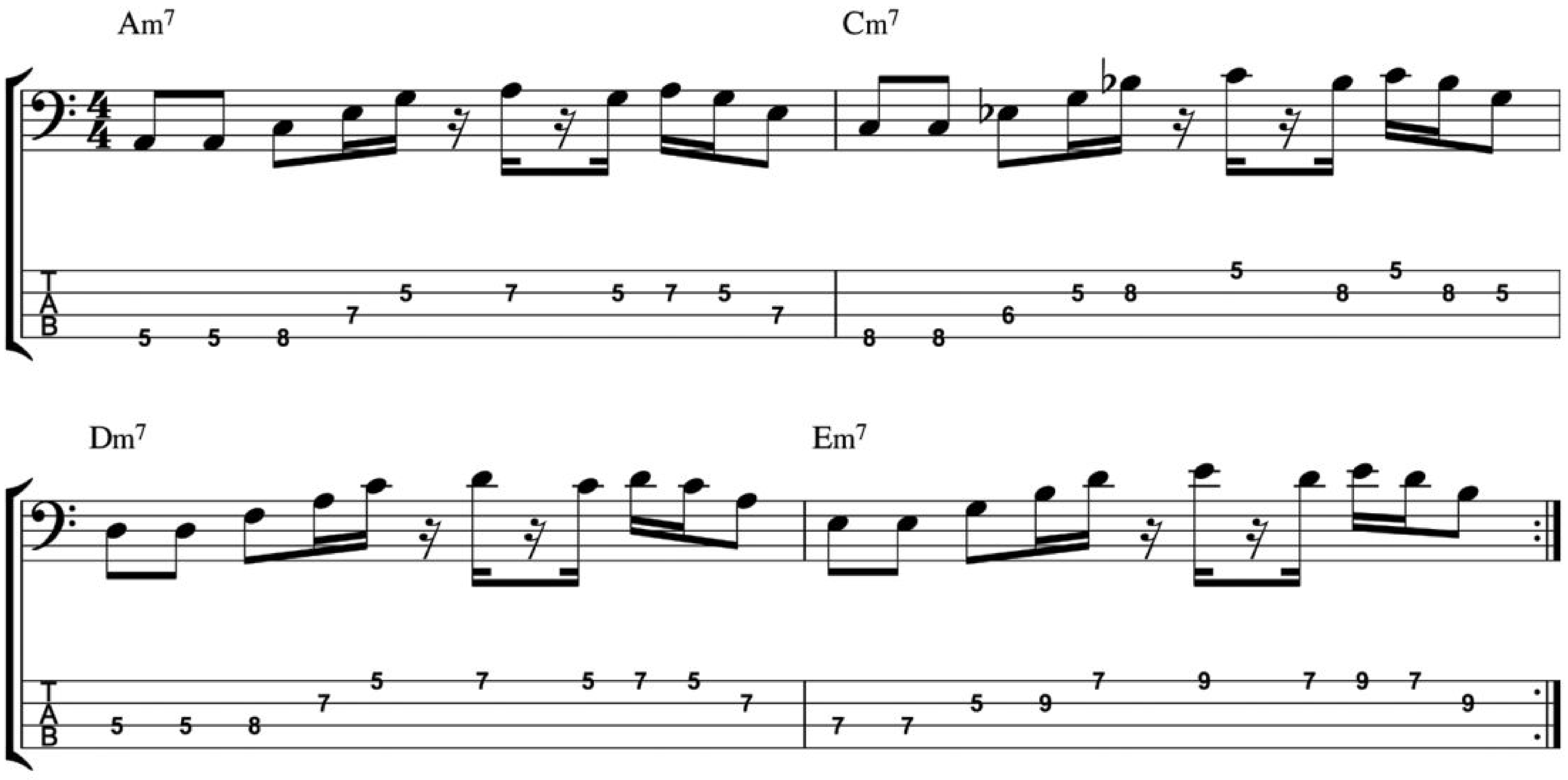
EXAMPLE 2



EXAMPLE 3



EXAMPLE 4



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Example 1 is a bass-line consisting of major triads for each chord change, moving through a sequence consisting of G, A, C, and D major chords. Our first thought might be to play the initial G major triad with a forward triad shape, using our second, first, and fourth finger, and then move this shape up the fingerboard. If you try this with the starting note on the E string in each case, you end up playing the D major triad at the tenth fret, the final note being at the twelfth fret on the A string. This makes for a very awkward position shift to get back for the G at the third fret on the E string to play the repeat. Alternatively, you could play the C and D triads starting on the A string, but even then you'll need to make several position shifts back and forth to play the entire idea. On the other hand, if you use a combination of forward and backward major triad shapes, as per the tab, then no position shifts are required at all. The backward major triad shape is best played starting with the fourth finger, then third, and finally the first.

Example 2 is a bass-line consisting of perfect 5ths, a very common pattern for many lines. I often find that students invariably conceive of the forward shape for this pattern, using either first and fourth finger in double-bass position, or first and third, or second and fourth, in one-finger-per-fret fingering. This tends to require us to make continual shifts up the neck to maintain this pattern, which could be avoided by integrating the use of a backward shape for a perfect 5th. This can be played by starting with the fourth finger and playing the 5th with the first finger, across two strings and back three frets using one-finger-per-fret fingering.

Apply the integration of these two ways to play a perfect 5th and you won't need to make any position shifts to play through this sequence, although we might need to make a slight adjustment between double-bass fingering and one-finger-per-fret fingering; but this can be achieved without actually changing position. Alternatively, the entire idea can be played in one-finger-per-fret fingering if we play the first 5th with our second and fourth finger.

Example 3 is an idea using diminished triads for each chord change: here I suggest three different patterns that could be used. The first chord is played with a forward diminished triad shape using the first, fourth, and second finger. The second shape, playing the same arpeggio a tone higher, is a backward pattern starting with the third finger and then first and fourth on the next string. You can see that this enables us to play the first two chords in the same position.

We might just move the backward shape up a semitone for the next chord: alternatively use a five-fret shape across three strings, as per the tab, which will only require a slight adjustment to reach the Gb and no position shift as such. We can then revert to our initial position to play the D diminished shape, using the same pattern as the first chord: note that this is played as a descending arpeggio, thus starting on the Ab. Once again, we have avoided making any position shifts in playing this bass-line, this time using three different shapes to play a diminished triad.

Example 4 we have a chord sequence that uses minor 7 arpeggios. Again, I've suggested three different fingering patterns which let us play this idea all in one position with just a slight adjustment to accommodate a five-fret shape. The first chord, A minor 7, uses a forward shape starting with our first finger, followed on the C minor chord by a backward shape starting with our fourth finger. The next chord starts on a D and here we can use the same shape as the first chord. And then, for the E minor chord, I have used a five-fret pattern as per the tab, which requires just a slight stretch out of the four-fret pattern but no position shift.

I would not suggest that these are the 'correct' fingerings; if you can play the bass-line cleanly and with a good feel, whatever fingering you use is fine. But it's always worth considering different possibilities, especially with a bass-line where we are transposing the same basic idea.

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FRANC O'SHEA

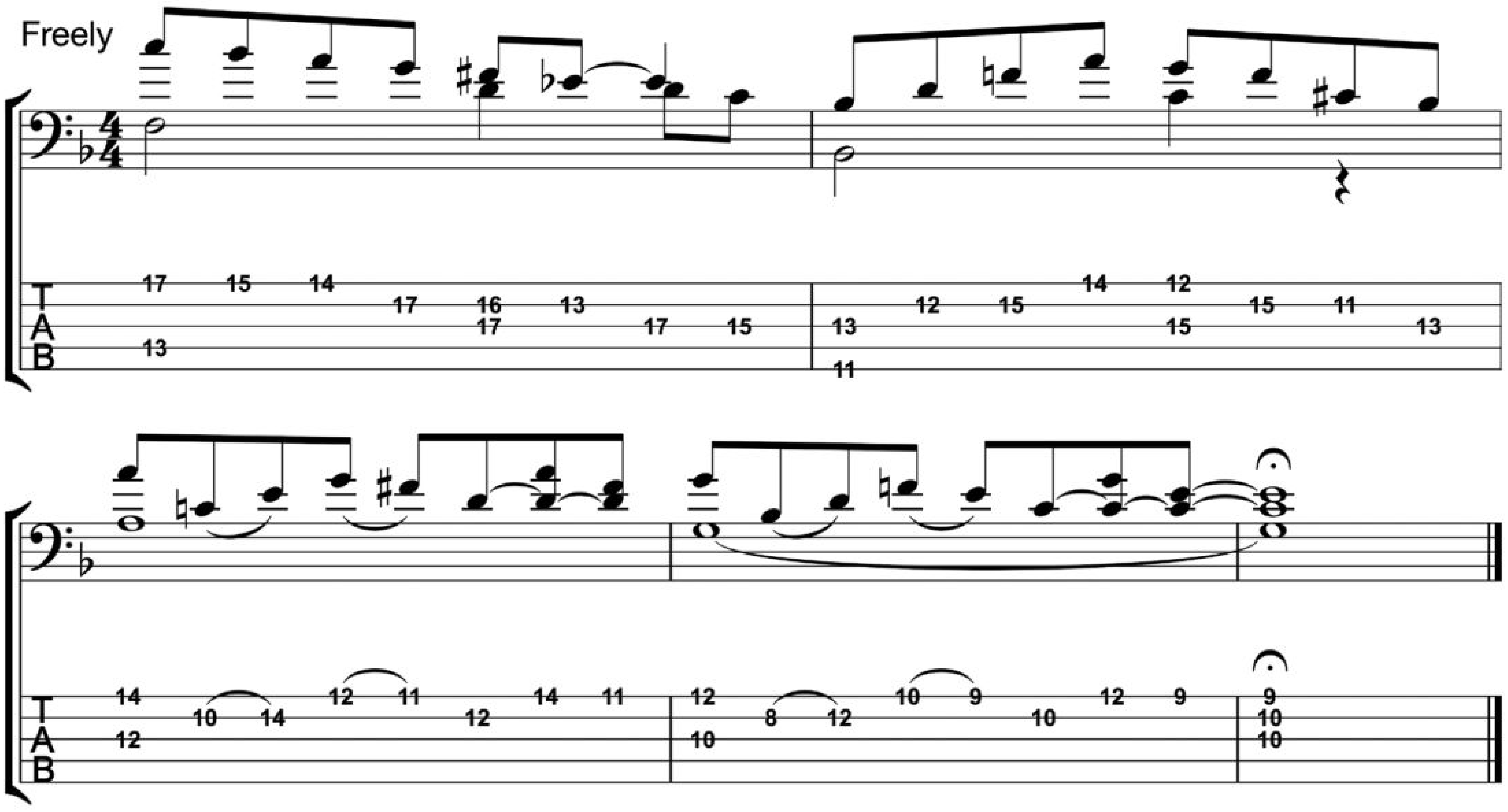
Sustaining root notes under melodies? Franc is the master

In this month's column, I will be continuing my series on building a chord/melody solo bass piece, by looking at sustaining root notes while playing melodies over them and using voice leading to create tension and release.

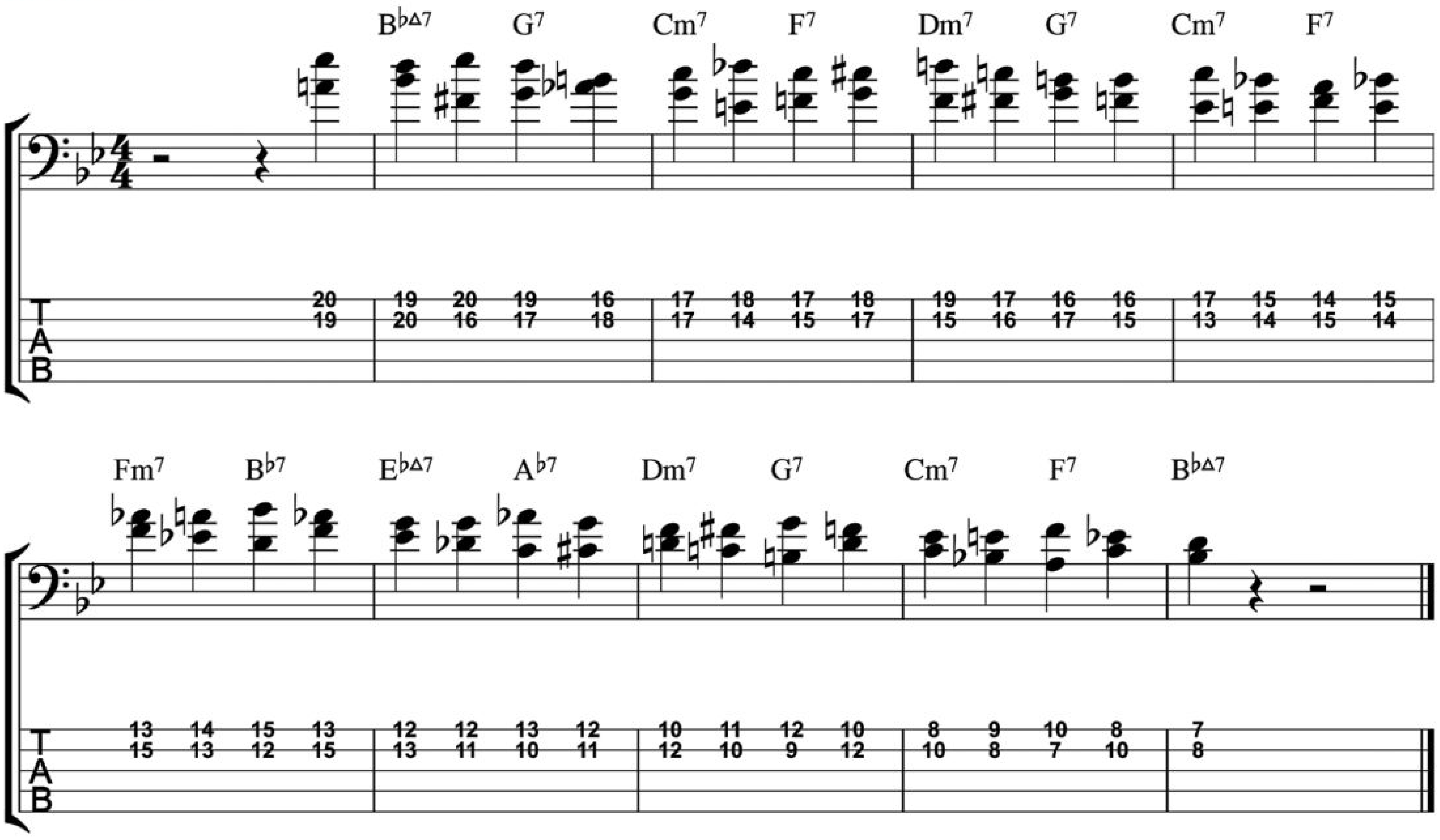
The first bar in **example 1** demonstrates the technique of sustaining the root note while a melody is played on top of it. The root is an F, and even though it isn't fully played, an Fmaj7 chord is implied. The melody descends from the 12th of the major scale down to the 9th. To play this, you will need to sustain the F at the 13th fret with your left hand index finger while playing the higher melody with your other left hand fingers. The next phrase, which occurs on beats two and four of the bar, creates tension as there is a momentary semitone clash between the D and Eb before it resolves with a minor 3rd interval from C to Eb. A D7b9 is implied at this point.

In the second bar, the melody comprises of an ascending Bbmaj7 arpeggio with a sustained low Bb note at the 11th fret of the B string. All of the examples this month can be played on a four-string bass,

EXAMPLE 1

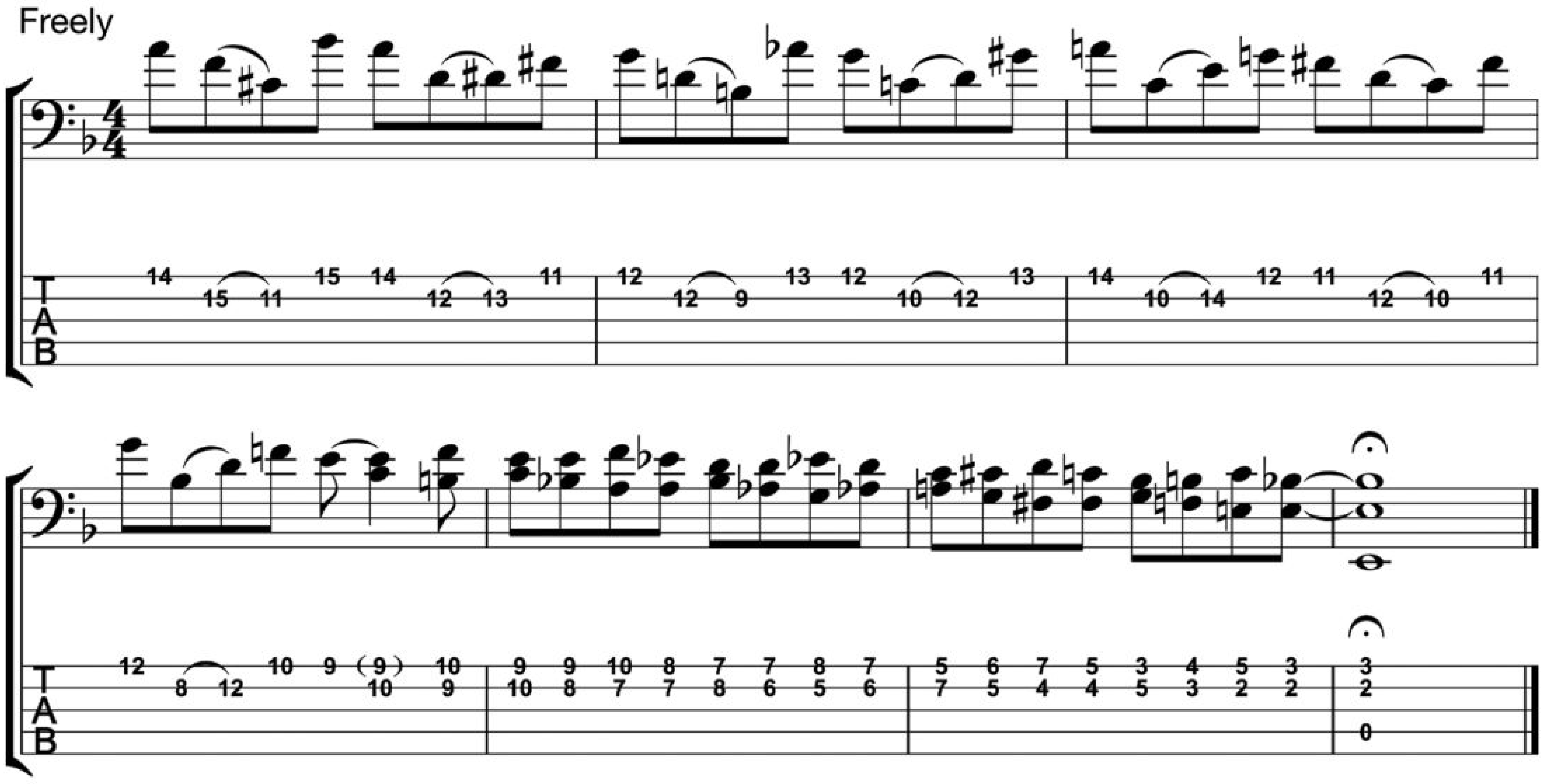


EXAMPLE 2

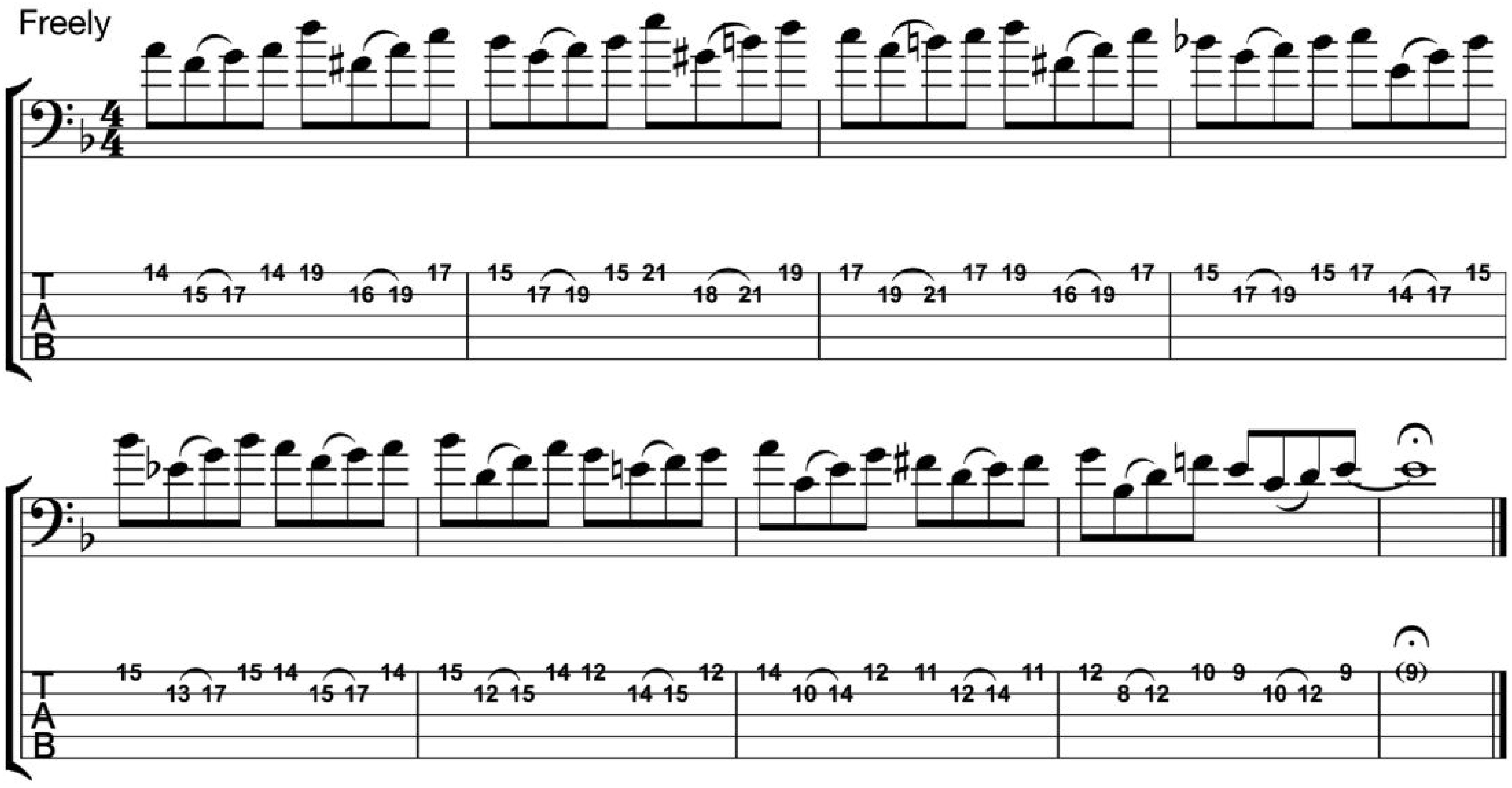


"THE MELODY DESCENDS FROM THE 12TH OF THE MAJOR SCALE DOWN TO THE 9TH. TO PLAY THIS, YOU WILL NEED TO SUSTAIN THE F AT THE 13TH FRET WITH YOUR LEFT HAND INDEX FINGER WHILE PLAYING THE HIGHER MELODY WITH YOUR OTHER LEFT HAND FINGERS"

EXAMPLE 3



EXAMPLE 4



even though I originally played them on a five-string. When playing this bar on a four-string you'll need to play the Bb at the 13th fret of the A string as a single note, but then sustain it under the other notes of the arpeggio. The next phrase outlines a C7b9 chord, with the b7, Bb, leading down a semitone to the root of the Amin7 chord that appears in bar three. The phrases in bars three and four are essentially the same, outlining a minor 7th chord followed by a dominant 7th chord a 4th higher. The only difference is that bar three outlines an Amin7 to D7 change, while bar four outlines Gmin7 to C7.

Example 2 demonstrates voice leading with two-part harmony. The first double stop, appearing on beat four of the first bar, leads to the root and 3rd interval at beat one of the second bar. The effect creates tension which is then released. The harmonies continue like this, with each subsequent pair creating the effect of tension and release. You will note that the extended harmony around which this example is based is indicated by the chord symbols shown. This eight bar chord progression is the A section of 'I've Got Rhythm' and is in Bb major.

Example 3 uses this same idea but transposes it to the key of F major. The difference here is that it doesn't include the pickup (anacrusis) used previously, and for the first part of the sequence, the double stops are broken up and played as single notes. However, the final bars resume the double stop format. This example demonstrates how you can take one idea, and by using a variety of approaches, extend it further to get more music from it.

Example 4 outlines the same chord sequence as in the previous example, although this time single note melodies are used throughout to convey the harmonies.

Next month I will continue to look at developing chord/melody for unaccompanied bass. Until then...

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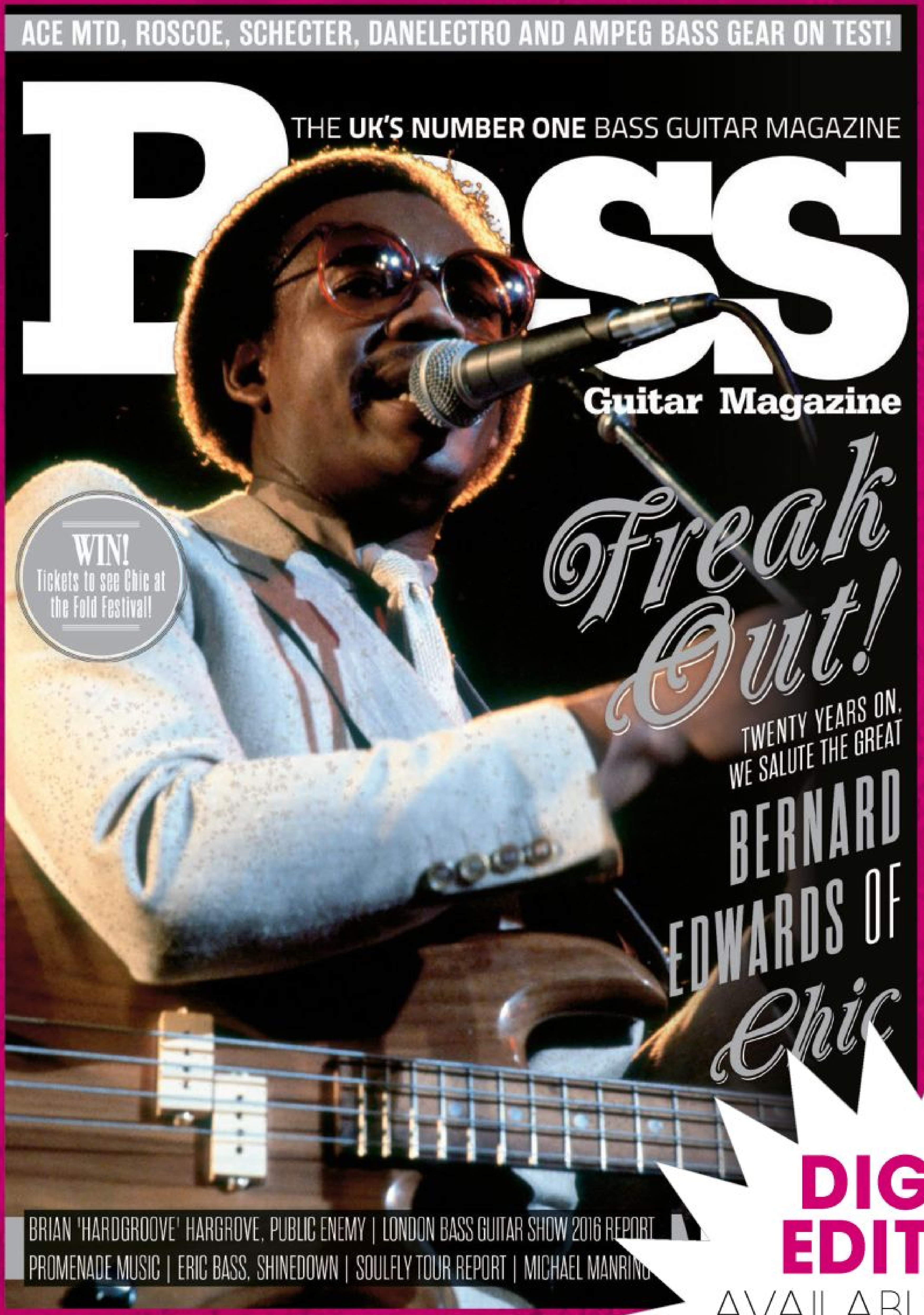

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PHIL MANN

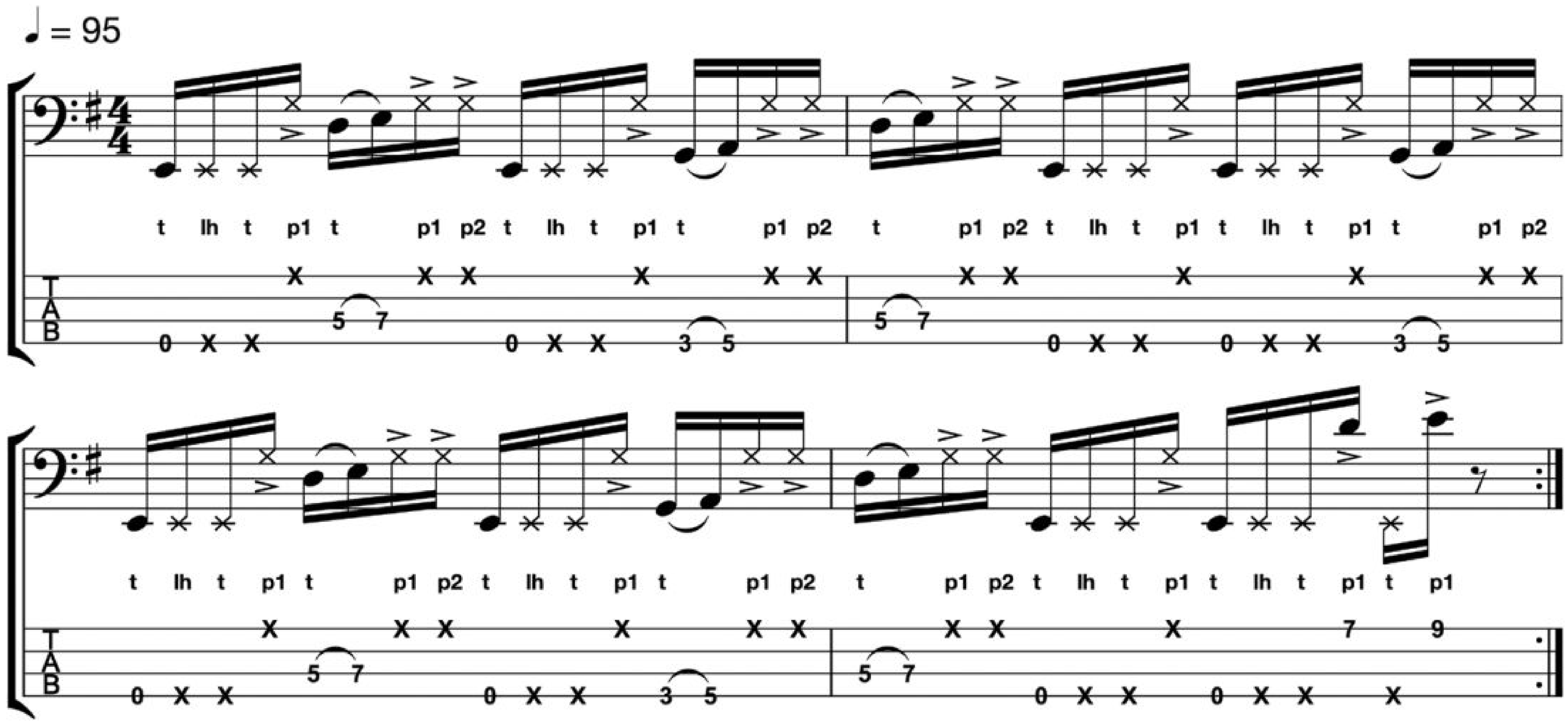
More signs o' the times with the ever-informative bass maestro Mann

Back in 2013, I remember attending a masterclass with Mike Stern, accompanied on bass by the legendary Anthony Jackson. Among all the usual guitarist chat about string gauges, jumbo frets and other fascinating subject matter such as whammy bar tensions, an attractive debate commenced focusing on 'time'.

Anthony Jackson remained predominantly reserved for the duration of the seminar, except for one occasion when an over-eager student directed a question at Stern about 'placement'. "How do you practise playing ahead of the beat?" he asked. At which point, like a somewhat startled Buddha of bass, Jackson raised his head to address the audience: "Let me tell you about time, and this applies to any type of performance environment. You only have two conclusions: you're either in time or you're out of time. That's it."

The comedic subtlety of his response was simply priceless. After this insight, Jackson returned back to his semi-meditative state, leaving the audience so quiet you could hear a pin drop.

EXERCISE 1



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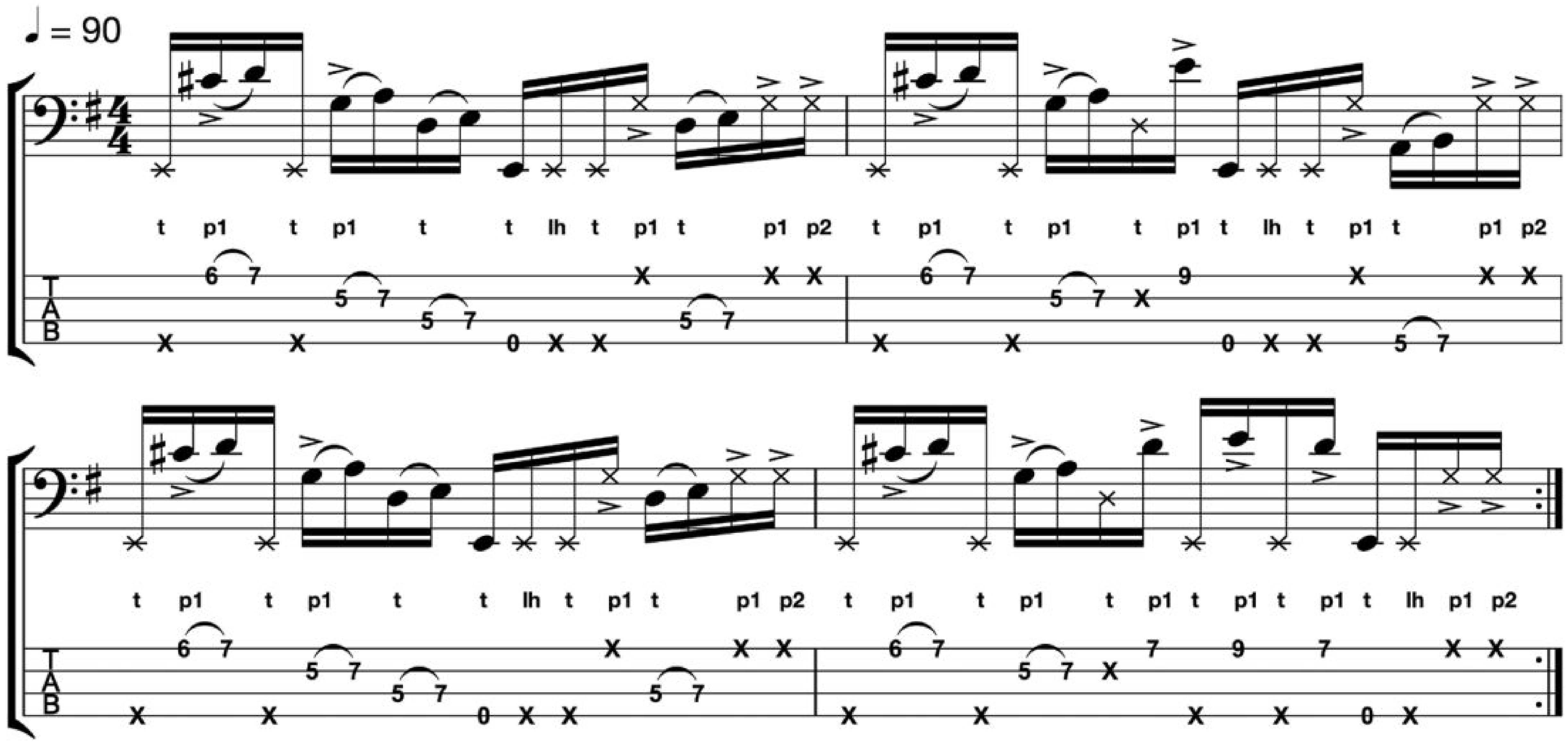

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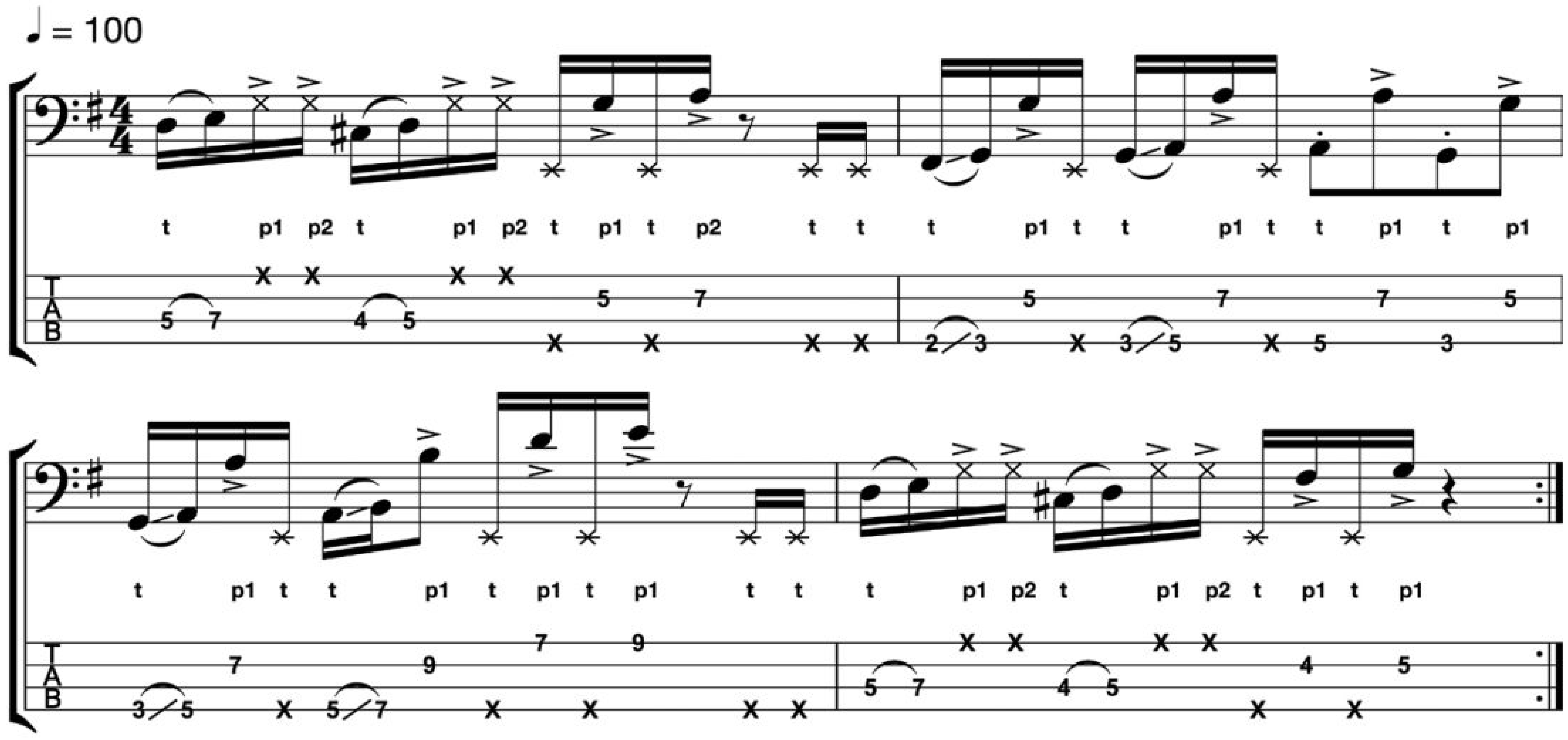

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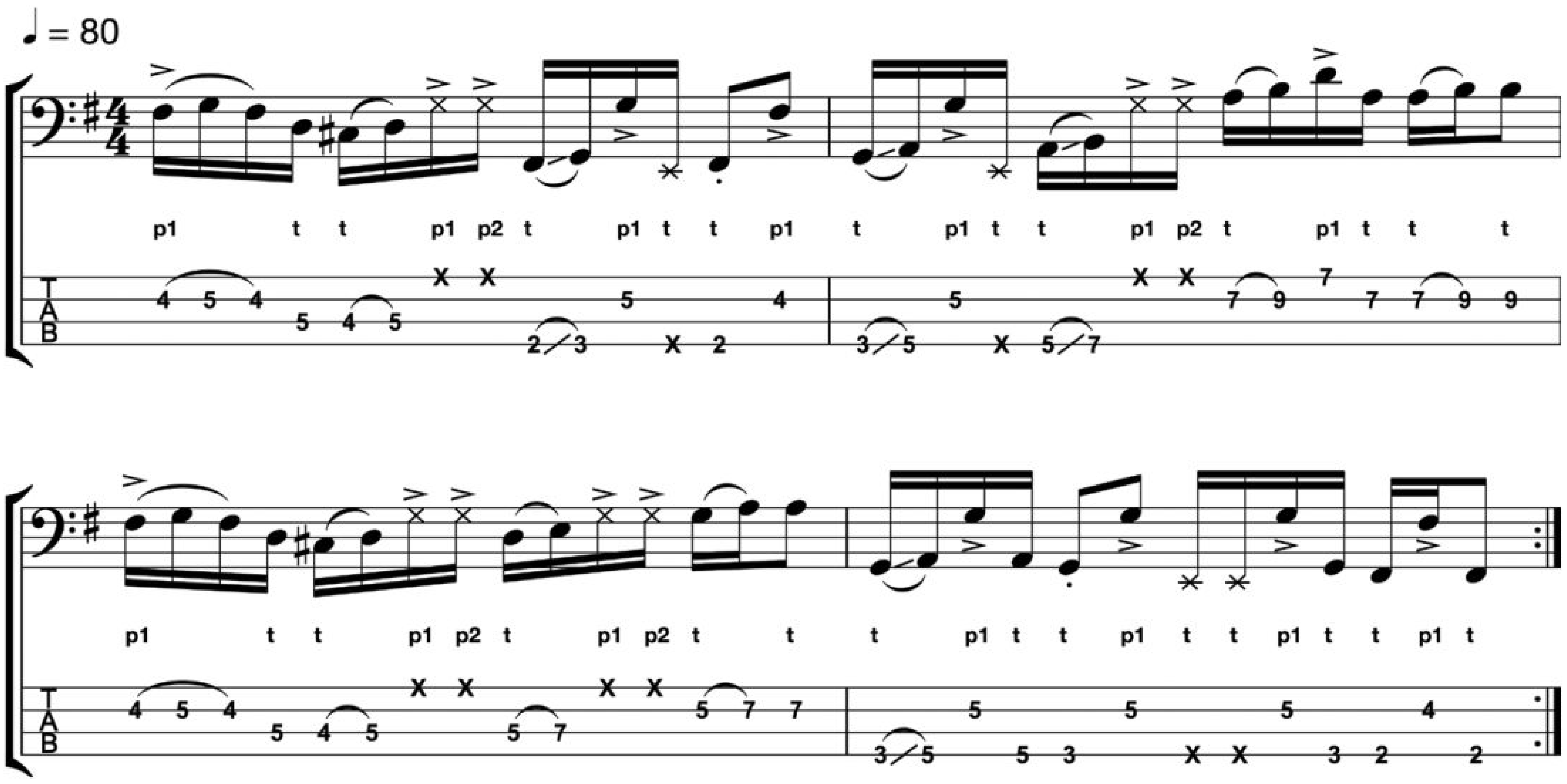
In an environment where so much effort has to be given to effectively executing the mechanics of slap technique, the appreciation of where time actually resides can sometimes become somewhat of an afterthought. This month, we'll be briefly stepping away from the more complicated subdivisions and grouping exercises that have been featured in recent issues of my column, in an effort to really bed in our understanding, ability and most importantly, confidence with the double plucking technique. Each of the following examples will concentrate predominantly on double plucking without the distraction of the more advanced rhythmic content.

The portrayal of the semiquavers found in **example 1** is delivered using essentially two key methods. The first is a combination of left- and right-hand movements found in the first beat of bar one. The second is the inclusion of a double pluck created by using both your index and middle fingers to pop the G string.

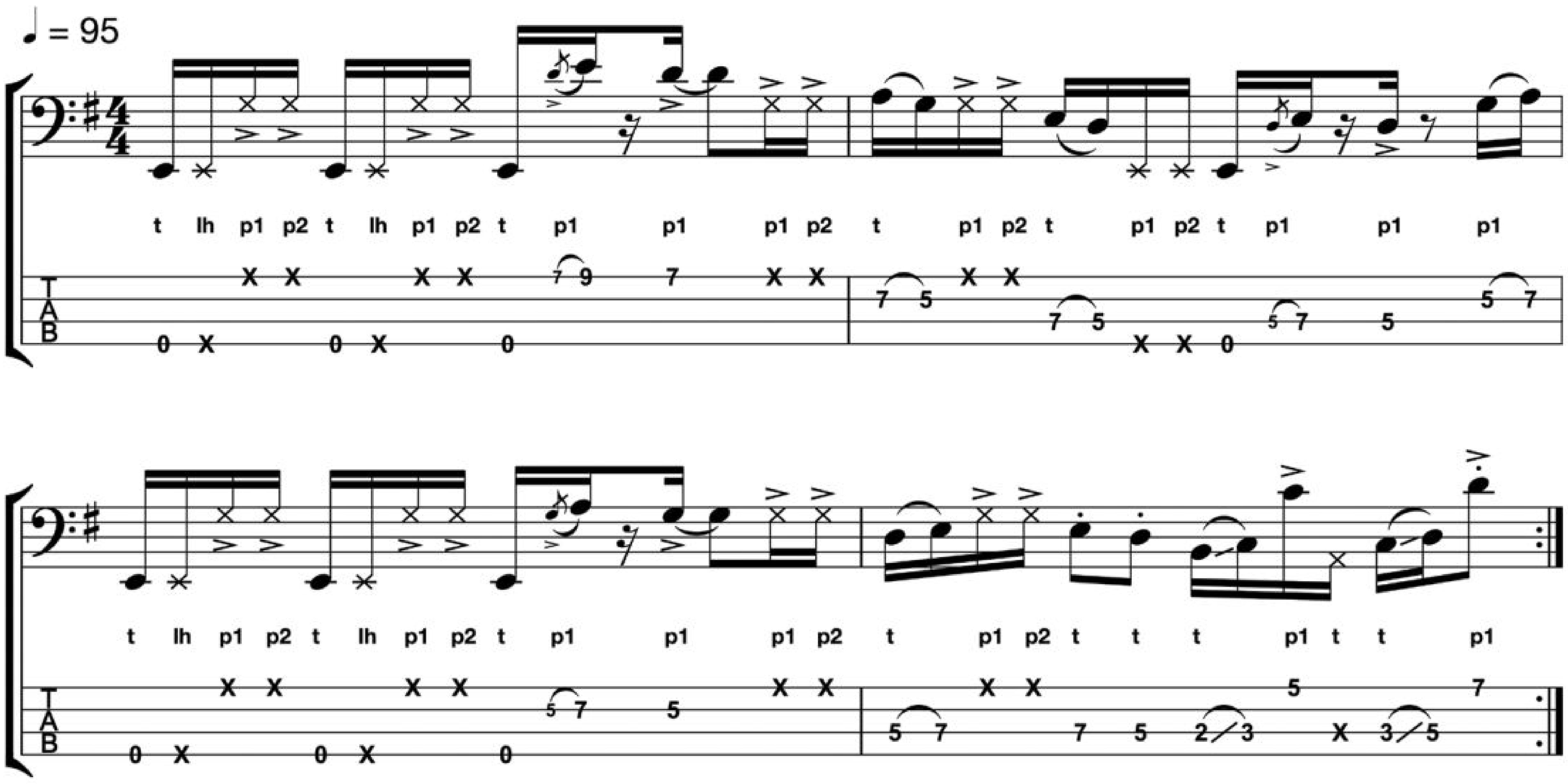
Example 2 expands on some of the initial ideas encountered in the first example. Once again, you'll spot the double pluck that isolates the index and middle fingers of the right hand, but in this example, hammer-ons are featured in a far greater capacity. It may be a good idea to isolate and loop some of the individual beats in this example, ensuring you are able to execute them both cleanly and smoothly before moving on.

On the third beat of the final bar of **example 2**, you encountered a phrase that was somewhat reminiscent of Flea's rhythmically charged way of performing slap bass, where individual pitches are surrounded with clusters of ghost notes. This technique once again appears in **example 3**, specifically on the third beat of both the first and third bars. Try extracting this idea from the example to use it to generate like-minded phrases of your own: it's a common rhythmical concept that I'm sure you'll encounter again in future studies.

EXAMPLE 4



EXAMPLE 5



> **"ONCE AGAIN, YOU'LL SPOT THE DOUBLE PLUCK THAT ISOLATES THE INDEX AND MIDDLE FINGERS OF THE RIGHT HAND, BUT IN THIS EXAMPLE, HAMMER-ONS ARE FEATURED IN A FAR GREATER CAPACITY"**

Much like its predecessors, **example 4** continues to evolve in content: beat one of the first bar contains a semiquaver hammer-on and pull-off phrase unlike any that you have encountered in this month's studies so far. Beats three and four of bar two deliver a pentatonic-based phrase that you'll have to take extra take care with as it is executed in the middle of your bass neck where the action is slightly elevated. When originally composed, this example was developed using an envelope filter pedal, so if you have one to hand, try to utilise it the best you can.

Tapping your foot throughout **example 5** will help you to acknowledge where the downbeat resides. Doing so will help you not to rush the melodic content and also assist you in not being dependent on electronic time-keeping devices such as metronomes. Until next time, practise hard – and watch out for those acciaccaturas!

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DAVID ETHERIDGE

David Etheridge looks at thematic approaches to soloing over 'Girl From Ipanema'

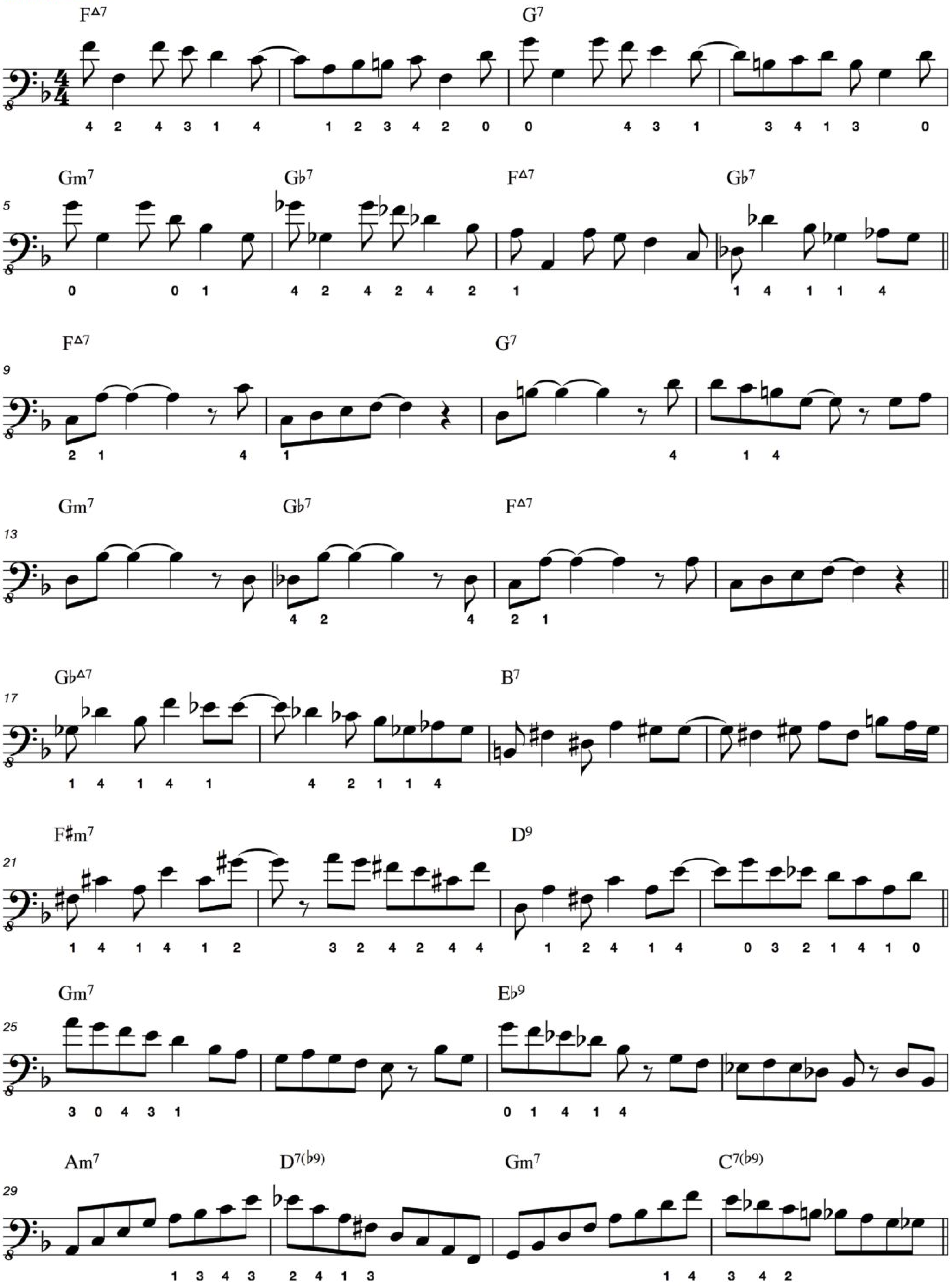
Let's look at another approach to soloing, this time using themes or riffs as the starting point. Last month I mentioned the idea of a planned solo versus a totally spontaneous one: both have their attractions, depending on your personal preferences. Sometimes solos will be an excuse for being flash and speedy – oh yes, we've all done that – and at other times our solos will be a prime example of restraint and taste.

Many years ago I heard a double bass solo which concluded with a speed-of-light three-octave scale of F, and back down again. All very impressive, but did it make musical sense? Maybe, and then again maybe not. On the other hand, take just about any solo by the legendary Ray Brown, and you'll hear that they're full of melodic invention and delight, without putting in speed for the sake of it. Mind you, there's nothing wrong in surprising an audience with how much you can achieve and communicate with a solo.

Solos shouldn't simply be an excuse to show off your technique at its macho finest, even though we're all guilty of exactly that at times. Ideally, a solo should make musical sense, and have themes and ideas which you can use as jumping-off points: signposts and markers, if you like. A theme or motif can be as complicated or as simple as you like, and here are some ideas, once again over our chord progression for 'Girl From Ipanema'.

I've taken a basic motif for each section of eight bars. The first one uses an octave jump and scalic phrases up and down. Syncopation fits in well with Latin grooves here. The basic motif is transposed up and down but keeps

EXAMPLE 1



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in with the chord tones in each bar. Notice that you can add a ninth to the major 7th chords. Your ear will interpret that in exactly that way.

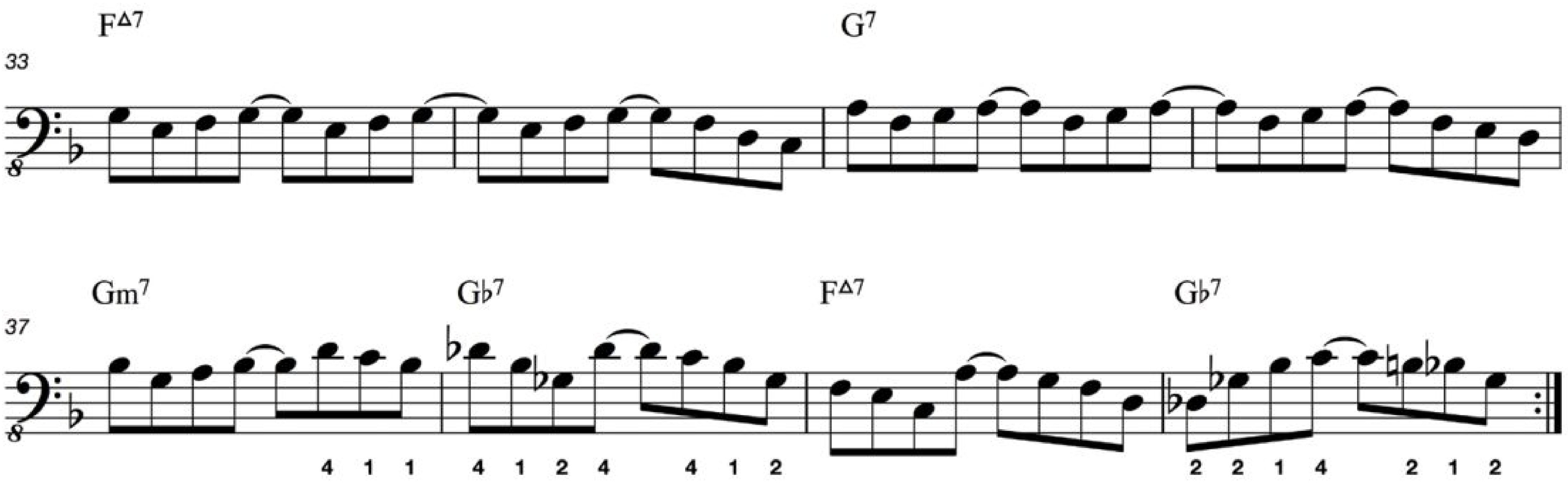
The second motif from bar nine is an interval: here a major 6th, followed by an ascending or descending scale. In fact you could just as easily use 3rds, 5ths, 6ths or octaves, although you're not limited to those. For example, you could use a 4th interval from the dominant (5th) of the chord up to the root, or use a major or minor 2nd to resolve to either the chord root or one of its tones: 7th to octave, 2nd to root, 4th to 3rd, 6th to 5th, whatever takes your fancy. The principle here is that any interval can start as a basic building block of your musical line.

In the next section from bar 17, we're using parallel 5ths to outline the chord tones: root and 5th, 3rd and 7th. I've suggested beat displacement: three quavers for the rhythm across the 4/4 beat. In bar 21 we add the 9th to the phrase to extend the F#m7 chord, which actually anticipates the D9 in bar 23 and melodically extends it to the 11th (top G). In bar 25, the motif is a scale down, starting on the 9th and following the chord tones of Gm7, while in bar 25 we're taking the same idea but starting on the 3rd of the Eb9 chord; it's answering the phrase of the Gm7 chord. The turnaround basically uses the chord tones of each chord to help describe the movement.

This is only a suggestion. You can imply all sorts of movement, and as I did last month, include chromatic movements and common tones to each chord to add interest. Remember that chord tones can be a jumping-off point for further extension, suspensions and resolutions, both in harmony and melody.

The last section is very straightforward, with the motif being a variation on the melody line of the tune itself, but following the chord progression itself, once again with syncopation and beat displacement.

EXAMPLE 2



A simple riff like the one in bar 33 can be turned upside down (EGFE rather than GEFG) or rhythmically altered as far as your creativity will let you. Even the most simple interval or motif can be changed this way to add interest and lead you into different avenues. You may try a very busy solo, or a very sparse one, with lots of spaces or contrast both in the same solo.

I've added some suggested fingerings here, and they are only suggestions, of course. The notes in half and first position I've left for you to work fingerings out for, as they're self-explanatory. If you wish, try them in higher positions across one string to see if that suggests new fingerings.

The high octave jumps use quite a bit of extension fingerings and cross three strings to save you whizzing up and down through the positions. Notice at the end of bar three that the high D is actually an octave harmonic, so that you can go straight across to the neighbouring octave G without having to move. In bar six, the Gb riff is played in one extended position – which makes things easy, and follows the principle of playing as many notes as possible in one position.

A similar situation occurs at the end of bar 24, where we play the high D as a harmonic, ready to jump to the high A in the next bar. The second half of bar 29 and the first half of bar 30 will be extensions in 4th and 5th positions, moving to and from first and half. These are very easy jumps as the thumb will always land in the corner of the neck where it meets the body on your instrument.

Now all of this seems incredibly detailed in the description, but in the actual playing it'll occur faster than you think, and often you might wonder where all this rather nice music came from – or indeed, why it sounded so naff! Experimentation is the key, and we all learn through mistakes. At the end of the day, you'll find that true inspiration occurs seemingly by magic – all part of the fun. Trust yourself, your muscle memory and your creativity. The rest will follow.

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STEVE LAWSON

Hunting down the pedals you need with Commander Lawson

Following on from last month's consideration of what particular pedals make possible, let's have a think about 'things you didn't know you didn't know' – the old Rumsfeld conundrum of 'unknown unknowns'. That search for pedals that make certain sounds or sets of sounds possible has a far shore that leads off into a world of sounds that you didn't even know were possible with a bass. These might be pedals that combine different parameters in ways that morph, distort and mutate the sound that we put into them until it's unrecognisable as a bass. Or sometimes, just unrecognisable as the kind of bass that you're currently playing...

There are two ways I like to explore this. One is through the work of boutique pedal manufacturers – people who dedicate their lives to making amazing sounds without needing to sell thousands of them to meet the requirements of financial backers. I've said before that we're living in an age of unprecedented expansion of ideas for pedal users and abusers, and the bleeding edge of that is the people who are tinkering away with soldering irons making weird and wonderful devices that produce sounds you didn't know you would ever want to make.

YouTube is the most incredible resource for discovering these sounds and ideas: just look up the work of builders like ZVEX, Catalinbread, Chase Bliss Audio or Earthquaker Devices. Check out the YouTube channels of pedal-fiends like Juan Alderete, and follow the chain of recommended videos into the dark corners of sonic weirdness that the web has to offer. Go there with an open mind, and see what you can find. Some of these pedals are a big investment – as is pretty much everything that gets made by hand, rather than by machines or sweatshops – but they can become the thing that sets you and your band apart from others in your scene.

My second path to sonic discovery beyond my current awareness is hanging out with music tech hackers. Hardware hackers, software tinkerers, musicians who code, and coders who just like having a new project to mess with. Last month I spent a weekend at Music Tech Fest in Berlin, with the express purpose of exploring what was happening at the bleeding edge. Over the last year or so, something amazing has happened in the music tech hacker world – most of the obvious 'use laptop to make bleepy noise' hacks have been done, and they've provided a body of code that others can work on.

Now, the work is getting ever more sophisticated in ways that those of us who've spent our waking hours learning how to slap, tap and improvise in the Lydian dominant mode can only dream of. Surrounding myself with techies, embracing my own expertise and letting go of the things I know less about, offering my input from a performer's perspective to their tech innovations – that's where the exciting stuff happens.

From the MIDI control possibilities of the Mi.Mu Gloves to considering what possible new innovations a synth accordion with an accelerometer fitted might offer to a bass player, stepping sideways from the world of the possible and desirable to the world of the improbable and occasionally unfathomable opens up new vistas for creative exploration. So, go find a programmer, a techie, a friend who's experimenting with pedal building or coding in Max/MSP – buy them a coffee and talk about what's possible. You may well step through the wardrobe into a whole new sonic world.

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Advertising Index

Allianz Musical Insurance 67

Aria UK 19

Ashdown Engineering 2

Barnes & Mullins 15, 27

Bass Centre 37

Bass Direct 9

Dingwall 89

Elixir...Spons

Harvest leather 29

Headstock Distribution Ltd..55

Korg (Hartke) 59

Madison & Fifth 63

Marvit basses 66

Mayones...73

Promenade 39

Radial Engineering 31

Rotosound 7

Sadowsky 63

Sims (Enfield Basses) 11

Stonefield Musical Instrument Co, Ltd. 13,43,ISBC

Strings & Things .... OSBC

Surine Basses...63

Swan Song Guitars 67

Warwick 3,21

Willcox guitars (Lightwave systems)..........................51

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Classic

BASS ALBUMS

Mike Brooks looks back 45 years to James Brown's epic *Love Power Peace – Live At The Olympia, Paris, 1971*

In 1971, James Brown was at the height of his powers. The political background in America, which much of his late 60s output had soundtracked, was changing – and a new era of music was emerging, namely funk. Now funk can be a genre, a groove, a way of life, a personality or attitude, but there is no doubting that Mr Brown was one of the major funk pioneers – and he brought the genre to the masses in such a way that it couldn't be ignored.

This album, recorded on March 8 1971 in Paris, captures James at his peak with a red-hot band, The JB's, which featured the one and only William 'Bootsy' Collins on bass, his brother Phelps 'Catfish' Collins on guitar and the legendary Fred Wesley on trombone. Considering Bootsy was only 19, and the band had been with James for a mere 12 months at this point, the performance is tight, slick and totally in the pocket. Judging by the recording, and the recently discovered footage from the show, Bootsy was using a 1960s Fender Jazz, probably fitted with flatwound strings and played through a twin cab Ampeg rig to shift some serious air.

The whole album is a lesson in groove; considering the stress Bootsy must have been under, he plays out of his skin – being so young and knowing that mistakes weren't tolerated by Mr Brown (in fact, every mistake incurred a fine). Many of the songs follow a similar blueprint, sticking to a well-worn groove with maybe one or two key changes: the entire band keep it tight but loose, funky and greasy, but always 'on it'. The guitar solos are a little self-indulgent – but if James wanted it that way, who are we to argue?

'Brother Rapp' kicks things off at a frantic pace. 'Ain't It Funky Now' is a killer groove with everyone taking a solo, although on the CD, Bootsy's solo was omitted, perhaps due to space restrictions on the disc: thankfully we can see it on the live footage. 'It's A New Day' shows how tightly syncopated and locked in the band were with each other, the horns working seamlessly with the rhythm section: there's no doubting that these guys rehearsed themselves to the bone to keep James happy.

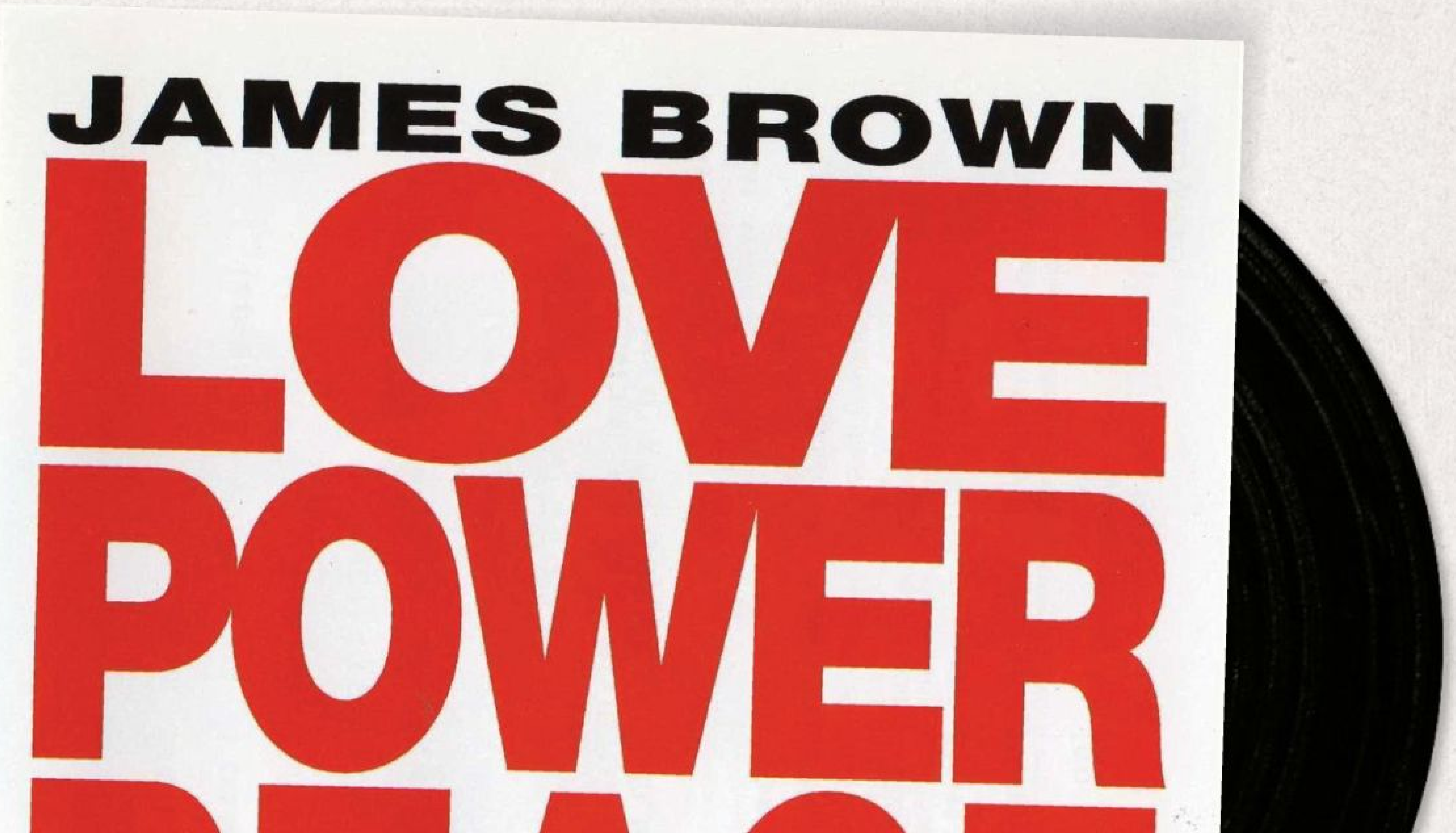
Some of Bootsy's tastiest licks and fills come out on the slower soul ballads such as 'Georgia On My Mind', 'Try Me' and 'Bewildered'. And then we have 'Sex Machine', a number that needs no introduction and lasts nearly nine minutes, such was its popularity at the time. Bootsy fills the groove with some root-octave passages to offer some variation, and to keep the song moving. 'Give It Up...' is a funk workout of the highest order, similar to 'Sex Machine' in many ways in that the horns take the lead and the rest of the band underpin their melodies. 'Soul Power' is another of the classic James Brown bass-lines; starting at 1'20", Bootsy lays down the groove-laden line, full of stops and short sixteenth sections that fit with the underlying funk sixteenth groove that so many funk tunes rely on.

This album in particular shows how the band had to be on their toes through the whole show, with James slipping from one song into another at the drop of a hat. This was probably orchestrated beforehand, of course, but he certainly knew how to keep his band alert. One song finishes, a new song starts and then halfway through that tune, the previous song will be reprised. Somehow it works – and the flow is never interrupted.

Yes, the aforementioned guitar solos are a little self-indulgent – but in this context it works, and the whole is greater than the sum of the parts.

Despite being a taskmaster of the highest order, Brown knew how to put on a show and entertain people. If you thought a sanitised *Greatest Hits* album is the only James Brown material you need to own, think again! Check this live feast out, and then uncover any other classic JB albums you may have missed out on. You'll be glad you did.

> "THE WHOLE ALBUM IS A LESSON IN GROOVE; CONSIDERING THE STRESS BOOTSY MUST HAVE BEEN UNDER, HE PLAYS OUT OF HIS SKIN"



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